Alone Together

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Alone Together

by BitterBlue01

Summary

Hannibal Lecter is attending one of the many large public schools in New Orleans, waiting for something to make his life less dull. The murder of his sister has left him practically mute and his inner monster had yet to grow a person suit. An ultimatum leaves him in need of a "friend" but when he meets Will Graham his world is turned upside down. Bloody noses, sticky summer nights, and mutual understanding envelopes the two lonely boys as they learn how to disguise themselves amongst society.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean any of it
I just got too lonely, lonely, whoa
In between being young and being right
You were my Versailles at night"
(4th July by Fall Out Boy)

Notes

Hi guys, this is my first work. I will be adding tags as we go and I have a basic story board outlined for this project. I do not have a posting schedule yet, but I will try to have at least two postings per month. I am very excited to do this, I love the idea of young Hannibal and Will because of the possibilities!
I will apply warnings at the beginning of chapters that contain violence or suicide. My goal is to make this a beautiful tragedy that will hopefully lead to a second part!
That being said, I accept constructive criticism! I am open to any ideas and will acknowledge the user's idea in the chapter it is used in. I hope you like my depictions of the characters and writing,
no smut in this particular series but there is intimacy that might wet ya'll insatiable kinky appetites. Be patient, they will grow up eventually, I am not comfortable in writing any underage sex.

Alrighty my fellow fannibals, enjoy reading my fic in the car, between classes, or at 3:45 AM in bed when you should be asleep but... one.. more.. chapter!
Stay schnazzy

See the end of the work for more notes

Masks and Blue Eyes

Hannibal was silent.
This was no surprise to the guidance counselor; the teen never spoke. He sat quietly in the cheap black leather chair staring through her in that reptilian-like expression. It would be incorrect to say it was a blank stare, no, there was intelligence and comprehension in those eyes, but they revealed nothing back. In a school of over 1,000 students, Miss Harper was quite tired and reaching the end of her patience, despite it only being noon. She adjusted in her squeaky seat again and sighed preparing herself for another silent response from the student across.
“Hannibal… You have been attending this school for over a year now… Have you made one friend?” Miss Harper’s voice was polite but contained an exhausted edge.
Hannibal blinked, then tilted his head to the left. He was assessing her, processing, and tasting the question, determining its value. His eyes blinked once more after limping seconds, then shook his head minutely. Miss Harper nodded, already assuming this answer, but needed it to reinforce what she would tell the teen next.
“Your teachers inform me that you do not participate in group work or activities, and you ignore your classmates…” Hannibal reacted to this by gently furrowing his brow and Miss Harper quickly deducted his concern, “However, they also inform me your grades are perfect, and that you just take on the group projects by yourself.” This seemed to appease Hannibal, whose brow smoothed back into a neutral fit. This next part is where it gets tricky.
“Hannibal I cannot report positive improvement of your adjustment here to your guardians if you do not communicate, that includes not only teachers, but your peers as well. Therefore, I am giving you two options.” Miss Harper spoke without looking into Hannibal’s intense stare, feeling quite uncomfortable. The teen always looked on the cusp of feral. No one could predict his emotions, only the response of silence.
“Either within next week you make a friend, a real honest friend, or you will be attending an afterschool social program. This program would be like group therapy, and I know your uncle would not say no to the opportunity.” She was nervously tucking her short hair behind her ear and adjusting again, the seat squeaked its discomfort from her movement. Hannibal was a statue without the hint of life. The teen then, ever so slowly, nodded his head. In comprehension? In agreement? Miss Harper did not want to put him with a group of other teens, it was clear he did not enjoy social engagement, but she could not rubber stamp him fit for a public educational environment without at least one consistent companion. The school bell rung loudly, concluding the last period of the school day. The Friday was a hot and sticky one in New Orleans, and everyone was ready to leave for the weekend. At the sound Hannibal stood from the chair, brushed his invisible wrinkles off his light t-shirt button up, and nodded his goodbye before swiftly exiting the room. Miss Harper tried to call out a “goodbye” as well, but Hannibal was already out the door.

Hannibal made his way gracefully through the bustle of student bodies, avoiding each one from brushing against his arm, and made his way to his locker on the west side of the school. Miss Harper’s office was on the complete opposite side of the building, and so by the time he arrived the hallway was practically empty. He gently frowned to himself as he unlocked the locker with his dial code and reflected on what Miss Harper had threatened. She most likely did not see her options as a threat, but it left Hannibal feeling cornered all the same. He did

not need a “friend.” Why would they be necessary to him, his schoolwork was perfect, and he never caused any issues with the mediocre teaching staff. Hannibal let himself sigh and started to gather the textbooks and papers needed for this weekend’s homework. He shrugged on his leather messenger pack, a gift from his uncle for attending the school after their move from Paris.

“And this is your new locker! You will be at B340, and Hall B only hosts students. The classrooms are after this in the hall over and will continue from there. Here is your dial code, how about you practice opening your locker while your father and I review textbook requirements!”

Hannibal was slightly startled by the cheery voice to his far right and turned his head to observe the scene. Another member of the office staff was leading an older man back from the hall towards the end, out of ear shot from the teen who now stood alone. Hannibal watched as the teen stared at the retreating pair then drop his shoulders in a defeated look. When the boy turned his head, Hannibal could better assess his profile, and felt the pangs of curiosity. The boy was short and scrawny, which made him appear younger. Hannibal knew to be in this hall a student was either a sophomore or freshman, so the teen had to be anywhere from 14-16. The next noticeable feature was the mop of chocolate curls on his head, giving him the appearance of a shaggy dog. It was almost… cute?

The boy fiddled with the lock, the dull ticks and clicks echoing quietly in the hall as he practiced, but Hannibal could tell this was to occupy time rather than an actual struggle. That is when the boy looked up and over Hannibal’s way.

It was electrifying, intense, and absolutely all-consuming in the most curious of ways. From the long-distance Hannibal could make out that the boy’s eyes were blue, but what kind of blue? Were they stormy with hints of grey or powerful with bursts of green? Hannibal oddly felt compelled to investigate, to what means he does not know. He then took in the boy’s expression and found it reflected his, not vacant, but passive and neutral. A mask.

Just as Hannibal parted his lips to speak the spell was broken by the pair returning. The boy quickly turned away and focused on the pair leaving Hannibal feeling the quietest version of rejection or dismissal. He closed his locker and left Hall B and the mysterious blue-eyed student. Something to ponder for later over his mundane weekend, and to investigate once Monday arrived.

As he exits the school’s front door entrance, he sees a luxurious black car waiting for his arrival on the curb. Hannibal quietly enters and sits in the backseats as the driver greets him.

“Anywhere you wish to stop before home, Young Master?” Hannibal shook his head as the driver awaited his response peering through the rearview mirror. They drove through the modern bustling streets of New Orleans until cruising through the older and wealthier district. Hannibal watched with boredom as the mansions and grand homes drifted by and thought how dull. It was all dull. The car pulled past the gated entrance and paused midway through the circle driveway. The driver exited then moved to Hannibal’s side to open the car door. The teen stepped through and quietly peered at his current “home.” Grand white ionic columns that held up the simple slant roof, behind was powerful rich brick and rows upon rows of antique glass windows. The shrubbery encased and twisted in circular shapes all throughout the front lawn, as tall proud lanterns stood guard as the young master made his entrance into the mansion. Chiyoh, Lady Murasaki’s lady in waiting, greeted Hannibal at the door.

“Lady Murasaki is waiting for you in the drawing room.” Her voice pleasant but monotone, the only other person Hannibal feels devoid of emotion as well but knows that to be false. She does not have something stretching and growing under her skin like Hannibal, no she has

nothing to disguise. She is simply being what is expected of her, and that bores Hannibal. He nods his understanding, and makes his way past grand windows, portraits, and old mahogany doorways until he stands before the mansion's drawing room. He knocks once, before an elegant "come in" allows him to enter. The Lady sits poised upon one of the many white cushioned chairs, spotless, while listening to a guest discuss something in great obnoxious detail. Her face is polite and sweet, despite Hannibal knowing how cold she can be, he watches as she gracefully concludes the conversation. "Quite wonderfully put, Mr. Riley, may I expect you at the Harbor Charity Banquet?" she smiles and gently takes the gentleman's elbow "leading" him towards the exit. Hannibal, during this all, had quietly moved to the darker corners of the room to hide away from socializing. This would be considered terribly rude, but Lady Murasaki understood his silence and never forced him to speak unless absolutely necessary. Lady Murasaki handed the gentleman over to one of the butlers and quietly shut the door, slowly turning back to the rest of the room, and locating Hannibal by the shelf hosting numerous novels for guests. "Hannibal… Please, sit with me. I received a call from your counselor, and I am curious to know your plan of action." She had a mirthful smile playing on her delicate lips as she swept the room to sit at one of the tea table by the window overlooking the gardens. Hannibal moved silently to his seat, watching her as she rang a bell for one of the maids. A maid swiftly entered upon the first bell.

"Please bring us a gentle tea of chamomile." The maid nodded and exited the room without a sound. This whole mansion appeared to be moving quietly, meaning Hannibal's uncle is not home yet. Lady Murasaki finally turned her whole focus on her ward and raised a thin eyebrow to encourage his response. One of the only people Hannibal will speak to, but even that is restricted to few words. He wished he could cut the wires of Miss Harper's phone, but better the Lady than his uncle. He sighed again, an awful habit, and decided to treat her to a sentence.

"A possible opportunity." His accent still thick and voice soft from disuse. The Lady nodded slowly and ventured further, "for group or a single friend? Hannibal how strange, I look forward to seeing you be… social." At this Hannibal furrowed his brows and decided to look at the garden than the teasing glint in Lady Murasaki's eyes. "You do know how to make a friend, Hannibal? You hardly acknowledge Chiyoh even though she is close to your age…" Her deceptively sweet voice was not as patronizing as her words appeared, but Hannibal knew she was picking him apart. Though she understood his silence, it did not make her feel pity or even the need to nurture him. Lady Murasaki was a beautifully cold woman, and she would correct Hannibal's ungentlemanly behavior behind closed doors with sharp words dressed in gentle tones. Hannibal both loathed and respected her.

Hannibal frowned now, deeper causing creases in his face as the maid reentered with a tray of tea and buttery cookies, they had sprinkles of powder sugar. The maid placed the tray between them and quietly dismissed herself as the Lady gently blew the steam from her teacup and sipped. Hannibal swiped a cookie to chew and keep his mouth occupied from speaking to the woman.

"Hannibal, dear, your silence proves my point. How will you ever find someone who will be able to read you? You are empty and you do not even disguise it with politeness or grace, which, would only benefit you." She paused to peer at him under long black lashes, "while I do not wish to see you in group therapy it seems the most realistic outcome. And so, we should prepare you now to practice speaking answering phrases and facial expressions." Her voice was smooth but final. Hannibal felt his fingers tingle with energy, violence and tried to calm, but her handling of him was so cold. Everything was cold. He felt tea scold down his throat but did not register the heat. Hannibal knew he was about to make a scene and did not

want to further incite the dreaded woman to nag and insult him… Hannibal did not know why he was not “normal”, but he did not mind until moving in with his aunt and uncle. He ate another cookie.

“… Hannibal do not let this simple fix taint your reputation. In and outside of the school, you will need to speak. Not everyone is patient enough to wait on your word.” She sat the teacup down and tilted her head, waiting for Hannibal to meet her eyes. He finally looked at her, and what she saw was coiled rage and teeth. He wanted to hurt her for speaking down upon him. The Lady smiled, “Now, please go clean yourself up and do your homework. Dinner will be served at six ‘o’clock sharp. Be presentable, please.” Hannibal nodded and left the room, reminding the Lady of a prowling predator, still growing.

Hannibal quickened his pace once he left the offending woman and hurried to the solace of his room. He closed the door behind him and sat his school bag upon the bed, sliding out of dress shoes and sitting at his desk. A shower can happen later, right now he wanted to sketch. He opened the drawer to his right and pulled a black leather journal with lightly tanned canvas pages. Hannibal had already filled half of the pages with sketches of Paris and the artwork he would visit in the Louvre. Bustling streets, women in high fashion, birds in flight, and the winding rivers that flowed through the city. Hannibal felt calmer and more expressive in his art, it had structure and elegance without needing him to produce it. He flexed his left hand and felt the itch of underneath skin, stretching and coiling his muscles. His monster wanted out or at the very least, entertained.

Hannibal pulled a pocketed knife from the desk and began to sharper his illustration pencils over the waste basket. He did this by muscle memory and could let his mind wander and peer outside his window to New Orleans. His room did not overlook the garden and he did not mind. Hannibal could watch the streets and memorize the architecture of nearby grand homes. Their occupants would stroll along the groomed streets chattering away in the muggy air. What Lady Murasaki did not know was that Hannibal did work on his person suit, he did it quietly and hidden above watching people express themselves when they did not know he was there. He enjoyed the pleasant man down the lane who wore beautifully patterned suites. They were all different colors and cuts; he could make a statement without needing to speak. When the man had company, he was strong and in control, guiding the conversations and admirers without loud laughter. Hannibal studied him and practiced in the mirror. Now he would silently wait for the gentleman to appear on his usual afternoon strolls.

Perhaps twenty minutes later and the man had arrived, a young woman on his arm. When Hannibal looked upon the suit he was reminded of a certain boy. The gentleman’s suit was blue, but hosted several hues of the color, and all Hannibal could think about were the stranger’s eyes that stared so fiercely back at him. They saw him. Maybe… maybe even looked into him.

Hannibal felt a twitch of smile on the corner of his lips, something soft and private, and decided from that moment he would commit to his person suit, if only to look closer at those eyes and know.

Consequences and Gain

Chapter Summary

Hannibal wants to make a good impression!... Well, it does not go how he expects but our boys' lives are taking the first step in blurring together!

Chapter Notes

Congrats u made it this far. If I had a gold star I would give it to you, so I hope this metaphorical golden star sticks on your forehead and makes u feel like u accomplished something today!
Again, very boring (by my standards, as we progress imma make this into a dramatic Spanish soap opera directed by Chad Stahelski) and a lot of just perspective, but progress is progress and-
why r u still reading my ramblings
u dont have time for that, read the damn chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal awakes for school Monday morning and decides to put his best foot forward and put on his person suite. He had been tailoring it all weekend, and now is ready to display it for the school (and show Lady Murasaki he can disguise himself in polite society). Hannibal hops in the shower and is thorough in scrubbing and rinsing his mousy blonde hair until soft and shiny. Next to blow dry and groom his hair, brush and floss, and dress. Hannibal had spent most of last night meticulously constructing the perfect outfit, something friendly but sophisticated. He settled on the classic white button up with a thin deep green sweater to throw over, and black dress slacks to pair with his recently shined dress shoes. Hannibal paused in front of the full body mirror to observe himself, and found he was pleased with the results. Grabbing his bag and heading out the door he almost forgot breakfast and decided that his energy was too great for something heavy. He entered the large kitchen, bustling with staff, and grabbed an apple and granola from the island's snack bowl.
Lady Murasaki was already awake and quietly making her way towards the dining room for her breakfast when she spots Hannibal striding out the door, back straight with a confident expression. She smiles to herself and decides not to call out to the young man, hoping whatever mission he was approaching would be successful. It would be dreadful dealing with Hannibal after group therapy sessions, and the Lady knew he was irritated by her already.
The drive to school left Hannibal in anticipation, and he played through several greetings in his mind for the boy.
"Hello, would you care to join me for lunch?" or "Do you need assistance in locating any

classes, may I aid you?" Hannibal did not like the idea of actually going out of his way for this stranger, but he needed a positive response. Soon the car rolled to a stop along the school's sidewalk and Hannibal readily hopped out of the vehicle and shut the door. It was strange to feel this anticipation.

He made his way up the sidewalk and onto the broader walkway that led to the school doors but shouting paused him in his steps. Hannibal looked about but did not see anything other than the other zombie-like students. He went off the sidewalk onto the lawn and continued his journey to the back of the building where the students lounged between classes and after. It was a large span of rough grass with a few trees growing tall, and in the center stood a clutter of students ranting and shouting towards the middle. Hannibal was about to continue his way back to the school entrance when he recognized a certain mop of curls moving in the middle of the group. Hannibal took a deep breath and made his way down to the group to investigate. There, holding his ground against a massive student, was the boy. Hannibal watched as they circled each other, the bigger brute (his name was Matt from Hannibal's history courses, quite an imbecile) was laughing at the boy's reluctance to accept defeat. Matt sneered and raised his fist faking a step toward the smaller boy. He flinched from Matt but kept circling, and Hannibal felt an odd connection in it. It reminded him of his years in the orphanage, defending himself from the older kids.

Hannibal shifted his gaze from the bully to his fists, noticing the crumbled-up dollar bills squeezed in his meaty hand. Matt had stolen the boy's lunch money, a classic shake down, except for the part where the bullied fought back. Surprisingly fast, the boy kicked the giant's knee causing Matt to lurch forward in surprise, throwing his arms out to catch his fall. The boy took it as an opportunity to jump on the brute's back and wrap his skinny arms around Matt's neck and tightened his hold. The crowd grew louder and cheered at both, but Hannibal could not hear them. He was mesmerized by the dark vengeful look that stormed in the boy's expression. It was David taking on Goliath, small but determined, and Hannibal felt kinship in the action.

Unfortunately for the boy, his skinny arms could not hold tight once Matt stood back up and pulled them apart, tossing the boy to the ground like a doll. He coughed from the force of air leaving his lungs and this is where Hannibal saw his golden opportunity. Without hesitation, Hannibal dropped his bag and crossed the circle to where Matt stood over Hannibal's ticket out of group therapy. He took a wide stance, pushing the force of his muscles forward with a left punch to the solar plexus, a nerve pocket at the pit of the stomach, causing Matt to immediately double over in shock followed closely by Hannibal's right fist connecting to the bully's temple. The giant wavered and fell to his side, slightly rolling due to the lawn's decline. The crowd silenced and stared in shock; the foreign kid had surprised them.

Hannibal straightened himself and let out a slow exhale, calming his pulse. As he came back to the present, he realized he was protectively standing over the boy who laid at his feet staring back with a mixture of shock and recognition. Hannibal stepped back and bent to offer his hand to the stranger who accepted it timidly. Later, after officially meeting the boy, he would learn his timidness was not in fear of Hannibal but rather someone helping him. As the two stood assessing the other, the crowd began to scatter from the yell of a nearby teacher. Vice Principal Jones had puffed his way down to the three (one unconscious) boys; face red and annoyed at that fight. "Mr. Lecter you are not getting away with this! I am going to inform your uncle and have you expelled! You two with me, NOW." He now stood a yard away, pulling out his walkie talkie to ask the nurses to come aid Matt. "Come on!" He began is puffing again heading to one of the fire exits.

Hannibal's face never changed from the neutral mask but turned his head to watch the

reaction of the boy next to him. His eyes were wide and flinched at the vice principal's shouting seeming to shrink in on himself. Hannibal thought this curious due to the boy's fierceness just moments ago. Together they slowly made their way to the exit door, grabbing their school bags left on the lawn. Hannibal noticed that the boy's bag was torn, faded, and had duct tape in some sections patching holes together.

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"Hannibal I am disappointed that you would behave this way! Fighting?! I thought we were past that last year?" Miss Harper's voice was filled with aggravation and began to pinch her nose in irritation. She looked up at the two boys across from her desk and thought they made an odd pair. Hannibal, despite his fighting, was still but together with hair gelled back and an air of aristocracy for someone so young. Then the smaller teen was skittish and avoided eye contact with her at all costs. He wore ratty jeans, too big for his skinny legs, and a faded green t-shirt that had slight oil stains about its bottom. She could only image the poor state his sneakers were in.

Hannibal looked through Miss Harper then to the student by him, watching the anxious mess and sweat roll down the neck sticking with curls. Was he scared of her too? Miss Harper was the least intimidating woman with her bright colors and blonde hair, why would the boy avoid her gaze so adamantly?

"William… I will have to call your father… I was hoping your first day would be welcoming not bruising." She stated this with a look at the slow bruising discoloration on the boy's left eye, presumably from Matt before Hannibal arrived.

Hannibal spoke the name aloud in his mind, tongue silently rolling the name around. He now had a name to those eyes and felt a twinge of success in this progress. He kept assessing William who now was gulping and twitched once more in his leather seat. William finally looked at Miss Harper, but stared at her forehead before responding, "yes ma'am."

"I am assigning you both with two hours detention for the remainder of this week. It will be held in the library after school, I will personally inform your guardians." She let out a sigh and tiredly watched their reactions. Hannibal expressed nothing and William wanted to be anywhere but there in the room with her. "Alright… Both of you, go to your first class."

Hannibal moved, grabbing bag, and slipping out of the office with William scrambling close behind. As they exited out, Hannibal began to quickly gather his thoughts, how he interacted with the boy now determined how they moved forward. Would William be upset with him? Would he quiver in front of him like he did before authority, or would he reflect Hannibal's mask back like a mirror? Before Hannibal could conclude, he felt a gently tug on his sleeve and looked back at William who quickly pulled his hand back to fiddling with his school bag straps. "Why did you help me?"

Hannibal watched the nervous expression and deep frown set in William's brows. He tilted his head and schooled his face into a polite expression, which only made the boy flinch again. This made Hannibal suspect that William knew he was merely exchanging one mask for another, but he continued with politeness. Hannibal's throat adjusted and he quietly answered the question.

"Because I need a friend."

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter we gonna have this amazing thing called "conversations" between mute Hannibal and Will, its going to be fabulous and will help this plot. Hang in there and I will be force feeding u beautiful heathens some more chapters soon. I have decided to do at least 2 chapters per writing session, so lets see how fast I can burn out.
Thank u for reading,
stay shnazzy.

Troublemakers

Chapter Summary

After school detention, a conversation, and an escape faces our troublemakers.

Chapter Notes

The songs that heavily inspired this particular chapter were Run Boy Run by Woodkid and Boy in the Bubble by Alec Benjamin. Truthfully, I was worried about how the conversations would flow, I am not use to writing these so any tips are very much so welcomed! Also I will start posting whos perspective will take over each chapter, the last two were Hannibal's (sorta) and the these two will be Will's.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The bell's high pitch ringing echoed throughout Will's head. He winced and slowly began to collect his work off the desk, he had finished up his algebra worksheets and was in the middle of a daydream when the school's bell decided to scream the school day's end. He nervously glanced about watching and waiting for the rest of his classmates to grab their bags and leave. Will preferred to be last to leave than be stuck colliding with other teens, drowning in a cacophony of teenage snarks and bright colors. The school was bigger than his last, and being within the city, full of more overstimulating fashion. No muted colors with the occasional yellow or blue stripes. No, this was the 80's, if girls didn't dress like Madonna and boys in obnoxious Fluro there would be a fashion catastrophe. Will was quite content with blending into grey lockers with his own muted clothing, though it is not like he had much of a choice.

Will made it to Hall B and began to open locker B340. He felt tension in the lines of his face and realized he had been clenching his jaw for several long minutes now. It has to be because of what comes next. Detention… with him. The mysterious violent older teen who had the eyes of a predator and face of those theater masks. Pale and stuck and full of sharp angles. Will did not dislike him, the guy saved Will from a serious pummeling! But he went from animated movement and kinetic energy to stone still, everything coiled and quiet. Will was speechless when Hannibal spoke, he almost did not actually hear what Hannibal said but was rather mesmerized by the foreign accent. Everything with the guy was mysterious and horribly intimidating that Will was dreading being stuck in a library with him for the better part of the late afternoon. Fuuuuuuuuuuuck…

He sighed and shouldered his backpack making his way towards the library at the back of the school. He had not gotten to visit the room and was surprised to see it so full and two stories

at that! It looked like a maze of colorful volumes with an open banister squaring off the middle of both levels so one could look both up and down the library. The lights were awful though, the yellow fluorescent flicker that would likely give Will a pounding migraine by the time he escapes this hell hole. The librarian immediately calls him over and eyes him something foul. “Your partner in crime is upstairs putting textbooks back. I will not tolerate any funny business ya hear?” the greying man grimaced, his face scowling like Will spat in his coffee. Will just might if this is what the rest of detention will be like.
Will kept his head down and walked to the metal cart overflowing with heavy volumes and novels and let out a sigh. He looked around and spotted a table with a leather bag resting atop. Must be where Hannibal sat his things down, better avoid that. Will instead went to the furthest corner of tables and decided to make camp there. Then returned to the cart to dig around choosing to grab everything from the science section of the library. Arms loaded he headed to the second level, pausing midway on the stairs to catch his breath before continuing up. He found the science area another section from where Hannibal stood. The strange teen was quietly flipping through what looked to be an anatomy textbook. From where Will stood, he could see a diagram of a flayed leg, showing the many layers of muscles, bones, and skin.

Hannibal’s head snapped up and looked right into Will’s eyes, all still and waiting. Will felt heat rise to his neck and quickly glanced back down and scrambled to the science shelves. Once out of sight he let out a breath and began to match the authors and title to the labels that covered each shelf. This went on about till the last book, one about the basics of physics, when he realized he wasn’t alone in his little space. Instead of looking up Will’s eyes followed the hideous maroon carpet to two gleaming oxfords. Not a single stain, not even from twisting in the grass to battle that idiot, but Will was covered in grass stains. His sneakers had been cussing at him the rest of the day, can’t afford another pair right now.
The oxfords took a step closer, and Will tensed in his huddled position squatting by the books. It was silent and Will felt that awkward haze coat him and dry his mouth. He gulped and cringed because it was too loud in this awfully empty library. Will knew one of them had to break the tension but damn he didn’t want to do it!

“You have blades of grass in your hair.”

What? Will tentatively lifted his hand to his mess of curls, fingers grasping and searching for the offending green. Hannibal must have grown impatient with Will’s fumbling, because he came closer. Squatting down to Will’s level and with nimble fingers plucking the blades out quickly. Will barely felt it, but most certainly felt Hannibal’s proximity. Will glimpsed up and watched the teen focus on Will’s curls, making him feel a bit bolder in observing that stone mask again. He concluded that Hannibal could be strikingly handsome with age, but now his old soul demeanor was unsettling for one so young.
“Are you European?” Why the hell did he blurt that?! God, he was such an idiot sometimes. Hannibal froze in his movements then backed away, still lowered. He still didn’t look at Will and seemed to be weighing something in his mind. “Yes,” was all Will got in those tense moments and it was almost comical how terribly awkward they both were. Will actually openly grinned at this which in turn caught Hannibal’s attention. He seemed put off, “is it funny?” Will’s eyes must have been as wide as saucers.

“No! No, no, no I was um, thinking about us-I mean this situation!” Hannibal tilted his head to this. “What is our situation?”
Will was frazzled and started his stammering muddle of words again, “w-well because of this morning and the whole Matt thing and then- me being your friend?! I mean not that I am too good to be your friend or something… I meant that it was unexpected and t-that I didn’t understand-still don’t!” He took a breath as Hannibal still stared expressionless.
“Where did you learn to throw a punch like that?” Will was fidgeting and finally just plopped down on the carpet, because he had sneaking suspicion they would be there for a while. Hannibal remained on his haunches, which should have surely been burning by now, but seemed unaffected. He responded to Will with an elegant shrug, “it’s location that matters.” Words soft and melting into each other, Hannibal spoke in an almost whisper.
“Well, I dunno if I could do that. I’m too small, he was gonna stomp on my head if I stayed on the ground.” Will felt his face blush in embarrassment, “I realized I didn’t thank you… Uh, thanks? For not letting me turn into fertilizer?” He winced and chose to focus on Hannibal’s chin. Hannibal hummed, “I thought you did fairly well consider your small stance. You would not have admitted defeat, it was in your eyes.”

Will was stunned by this. He remembers the anger, something cold and dominating that demanded he act. Seek justice. “He stole my lunch money… I can’t- … I can’t afford to lose that.” Will could sense his insecurities crawl up and place themselves bleeding open upon his wrists for Hannibal to see. To see his dirty hand-me-down clothing that did not fit right and sneakers using string for laces. To see that Will’s ribs protruded and hunger pains kept him up some nights until exhaustion won and faded Will into a starving oblivion. And the rich kid simply nodded with his eyes flashing an intensity that was not there before.

“To say food is valuable is an understatement, and the money that allows for food is even more so precious when there is so little… I understand.” His voice seemed to waver at the last bit and Will felt the hesitant pull. A pull of understanding and connection? Will clears his throat. “My name is Will by the way… I only get called William by angry adults, so i-if you want to be friends? That is what I would like…” Hannibal nodded to this and then held out his hand to Will, who had to untangle his fingers from the threads of his jean holes where he was fidgeting to grasp. Hannibal shook his hand twice, firm but gentle, and unbelievably warm. “It’s nice to meet you, I am Hannibal Lecter.”
Will smiles once more, something crooked and disarming. “You’re really strange, but I get that. But are you serious about us being friends? Why? You don’t even know me a-and what you do know has been fights and just awkwardness.” Hannibal had let go Will’s hand and frowned ever so slightly at this, assessing the questions. “I need a friend and you looked alone.” This struck Will deeply and he felt that connection pull another inch closer. He tucked his knees to his chest and decided to be less of a coward. Being alone sucked. Like really sucked. He didn’t get sleepovers, weekend bonfires, and movie trips. All he had was his dog Scrappy and Pa.

“W-would you like to hang with me after this?... so, we can actually do something as f-friends than troublemakers?” Will mimicked the grump downstairs and decided to look away in case of being met head on with Hannibal’s rejection. Instead, Hannibal answered with a slightly surprised tone, “I would like that.” They sat in this quiet moment almost scared to burst the bubble they seemed to find themselves in. Hannibal shifted and spoke once more. “Why wait?” He stood and patted off the invisible dust and walked over to the railing peering

down searching. Will scrambled up and crept a safe distance next to Hannibal, who put up a single finger to his pale lips, indicating for Will to be quiet. The librarian was snoring at his desk, a book left open on his chest and glasses sliding off a greasy nose. Hannibal began to walk back and down the stairs in complete confidence, feet never making a noise. Will frowned, realizing that is why he didn't hear Hannibal creep up on him earlier. Might have to get his new friend a fucking bell if this was going to be the norm.

Will did his best to quietly follow after, but alas squeaky sneakers with a loose sole liked to slap against the floor, that thankfully carpet swallowed up. They made it to the first level with the old man still in deep sleep. Hannibal pointed to Will's bookbag, both splitting up to grab their things and sling over shoulders. Then, Hannibal waved for Will to walk over where he then led them down several long rows of books, stopping at the west wall. It housed a few windows which remained shut with blinds pulled, a canvas like thing. Hannibal had Will hold the canvas blind above their heads (very difficult when you're six inches shorter than the rich kid) and Hannibal began to unscrew the lower window panel. He applied pressure and it quietly popped into his arms. He switched Will, and gestured for Will to climb through, and it was an embarrassing sight because he lost his balance landing in the grass with a soft "oof!" Hannibal followed sliding through as agile as a cat and pulling the glass panel back as the canvas blind fell to cover all evidence of mischievous escape.

"Aren't we going to get even more detention from this?" Hannibal looked down at Will and actually smirked. "Then we can keep escaping, watch them try to hold us back." Will felt the heat in his neck again, only this time it stretched to his ears. Damn you, Rich Kid. Will stood and they began to follow the back sidewalk moving to the same lawn where the fight occurred. He paused noticing a brown stain in the grass and realized it was blood. "When did Matt bleed?" Hannibal looked disinterested and continued by. They made it past the school's linked fence when a group of rough looking boys stopped them. "Aye, you're the shrimp ol'Matt tussled?" One stated this while obnoxiously smacking his gum. "Yah, lookit the damn foreigner too. Aye, mute, we gotta bone to pick."

Will looked at the five teens and realized they were fucked, he did not think Hannibal could fight them all at once and he was not ready to deal with them either. As the group stood straighter, about to approach, Will made a decision and snatched Hannibal's hand into his. He dragged Hannibal away like a whip, "RUN." Hannibal seemed to get with the idea fairly quickly and was soon ahead of Will because of long legs. He was the one dragging them away, to where they both didn't know, but Will felt his heart hammering against his ribcage. Hannibal looked back at Will and what he saw actually made the mask crack a little, because a small smile shined through right at Will's own. They were escaping together once more it seemed. Hannibal then looked past Will and seemed to pick up speed, Will took that as a sign not to turn his head and pushed his legs to catch up and at least match Hannibal's. They were still linked together, Will was clenching Hannibal tight as they leaped sidewalks, jumbled past cars, and rounded tight corners in the urban jungle. The insults and shouts died away as they ate yards and Hannibal yanked Will to a halt, slamming the smaller boy to his side. Hannibal only paused a minute before climbing the fire escape, hand never wavering. They crawled up up up to the top where the flat building overlooked the busy streets.

Will and Hannibal crouched and peered over the edge to down below as five schmucks kept throwing insults ahead to no one in sight. They cursed and kept moving past the building and

down the block. Will turned and sat back against the brick outcrop and realized how hard he was breathing. He started giggling which soon stretched to a hearty laughter racking his small frame, and Hannibal looked almost worried. Will was struggling for air, but he was still on a high from the adrenaline rush, rolling his head to the side and looking at Hannibal. “Crazy! Today has been crazy!” Hannibal settled beside him and shook his head with eyes crinkling in a shared mirth. As Will started to peter off from his laughter he looked down seeing that he was still connected to Hannibal.
“oh…” Hannibal noticed their hands then too and frowned in response. Will’s insecurity reared its ugly head and whispered venom. Will was the first to let go, but Hannibal’s heat was seared into his skin, it was phantom and harsh. Will decided everything was too much. This whole day has been too much. Matt’s flaring face, teachers’ irritation, scratchy carpet and horrible lights, gangs of bullies seeking revenge, and to top it all off was Hannibal’s searing but silent presence. It didn’t cloud Will’s mind with unwanted empathetic understanding, it left him alone. It was closed off from the world and his eyes had the curtains pulled. Everything was too much, and Will was too curious to let the one good thing from today go.

Insecurities be damned, he had a friend.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 4 is mapped out, now I just need two hours to crank it out, I am starting it as you read this. Goal is to have it done within tomorrow so you guys get that double chapter indulgence. See? Aren't I so generous ;)
The next chapter will be told in Will's POV again, and we are going to get a clearer image of his home life with his father.
As always,
stay shnazzy!

Shotgun Homes and Jambalaya

Chapter Summary

Will's neighbors share their warm family with him until he returns to his empty one.

Chapter Notes

Howdy, this is from Will's POV and we get to meet some new characters! We also see Will's home life, not the most stable! I want ya'll to keep in mind, Will is like fourteen through this, so his emotions are all over the place (more so than as a grown up) and they are abrupt too! Hannibal is of course going through the same thing as well but in his own... weird Hannibal way...
Anywho, enjoy! We are starting to wrap up the world building and scene layouts, so some plot will start taking front stage!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will kept his head down as he avoided the gaping cracks and craters in the ancient sidewalk. Chain link fences guided him, rubbing against his hand showing the way “home.” Well, it wasn’t home. It was just another house he and his father managed to buy. One of those shotgun homes, a single floor stretching a few yards and squaring off. The white paint was pristine once, but weather and smog had long faded the paint to something muddy and grey. The roof had water damage and the floors were rotten in some parts. No mold, yet, and running water with working electricity decided that this is where the Grahams would rest on their coastal journeys. What ultimately determined their placement was the job Beau Graham landed.
It was the first stable job he had received in a long time, working as dock maintenance and engineer. Will remembered sitting in a shitty motel along the highway when his dad busted in with a grin on his face, for once looking proud of himself. He was so excited to tell Will, his travel companion and only family.

“Willy, I did it! Your old man did it, no more motels! I got a real good one this time, with weekly pay and in a few months, health insurance too!”
Beau scooped Will up in a crushing hug that day, for the first time in a very long time. Beau had a habit of denying himself affection when he did not feel deserving, and that often left Will touch starved in his own way. Beau’s hugs were the best. He was warm and strong from years of hard work, smelling of motor oil and ocean spray. Needless to say, Will loved his father.
Will looked up to count the crooked mailboxes and turning down unkept streets. People sat upon their porches around this time, coming home from their 9-5 jobs. Sticky heat and

chatter filled the air as well as dinner being cooked on the stove. Will's stomach grumbled at that. He quickened his pace until he nearly ran into his neighbor, Ally. She grabbed his elbow and started flashing her toothy smile, immediately signing to Will.

"Hi! Will, how was your day?"
Will shrugged and let her hang off his elbow, she was just eight and didn't quite understand boundaries. Kind of like another strange teen he knew… She gently pinched his arm to look at her again when he didn't respond like she wanted.

"Sorry, it was long and tiring," he signed back. Will's grandmother was deaf, and before she passed, she taught him quite a few signs and the alphabet. Will translated between her and his father for the longest time. Ally didn't have anyone else who could communicate to her other than her mother, so she spent a lot of time chattering away to Will. It was easier than normal conversations, no eye contact needed.

"Mama brought leftovers from the cafeteria; you want some?" Ally had that pleading look to her, and Will knew his dad wasn't home from work yet… why not? He smiled briefly to her and nodded, making their way to Ally's front porch. Ally and her mother only lived a few houses down from Will and definitely made the move easier. They climbed creaky wooden steps and opened the screen door to pop in. Ally's mom, Jenny Smith, was at the small stove already heating a big pot of something delicious. She looked over at Will and Ally with a motherly smile and signed while speaking aloud.
"Hi Will, you're both in time, go wash your hands and come get a bowl." Ms. Smith made Will nervous, not because she was mean, but because she made him feel his own mother's absence. He wasn't used to noticing that void.

After washing their hands in the cramped bathroom, they each received a piping bowl of one-pan Jambalaya and went to sit outside on the porch to enjoy their meal. Iced tea and the setting sun really brightened Will's day. When Ally wasn't shoveling food in her mouth, her fingers were flying. She told Will about her day at school, from the crafts she made and how she really wanted to be a painter when she grew up. Ms. Smith nodded and would occasionally remind her to eat or that Ally could be whatever she wanted to be. Will was quietly jealous of their open relationship with each other, but overall, they were a quiet blessing to his new life here. They didn't judge his weird quirks or how strange he was. They were just kind.

After helping Ms. Smith wash away dishes, she wrapped up a bowl for will's father and handed it to Will with a smile. He said his goodbyes and walked to his own home, much darker and less welcoming compared to theirs. Will knew he was a leech, trying to bask in the warmth of their relationship, but it was hard to stay away. They opened their arms to him and Ms. Smith trusted Will with Ally, it made him feel important and needed. He wasn't use to that. Will unlocked the shabby door and walked in, turning on the small living room's lamp and moving a few steps to place the bowl in the fridge. He looked about, eyeing the cramped house and it's suffocating walls. Will knows he's supposed to feel pride in this… but its hard. It's hard to actually believe that this is the end of his nomadic lifestyle, the end of countless highways and foreign boatyards. The "new" small towns that would host him and his father with odd jobs here and there until the lack of work called for them to the hit the road once again. They followed the East Coast shores, once going as far as Maine. That was a beautiful

place, the town they stayed the spring at was like the town you found on a postcard. They never lasted long though. Will's suitcase was still partially packed, and he had yet to actually make his room his own. Will kept all personal touches to himself, a ghost living among these dying walls, waiting for his father to tell him it is time to go. In a way it explains his hesitance with the Smiths and even Hannibal.

"Don't get too comfortable, because by morning you're gone and there will be nothing left," Will quietly whispered to himself with a self deprecating smile.
Lights filled the front rooms as the gurgling of an engine was killed, announcing Beau's arrival. Will crept down the hall into his tiny room, only big enough for a singles-sized bed and desk. He tossed the bookbag onto the bed and opened his only window to let air circulate in the sweltering room. Too poor for AC or fans.

Beau's heavy boots made an echoing thump and a light knock on his door brought Will face to face with his father. They were mirror images of each other, aside from Beau's grey curls and much darker complexion. Despite being in his early thirties, Beau had deep set lines around his eyes and forehead.

"I got a call from the school… You beat up another student," Beau had an uncomfortable look to his face, not use to parenting or any kind of scorning. Beau was nonconfrontational to a fault.
Will shrugged and looked down as he fidgeted with his shoes. "He tried taking my lunch money, and well…" He felt bad but didn't regret it. Didn't regret standing up for himself, just for making life harder on his dad it seemed. Why did he always make things difficult?

Beau sighed and leaned on the doorway, looking down to where Will fidgeted too. "I got a call from Matt Hensley's dad, cussin' at me for 'bout fifteen minutes." He cleared his throat and stood a bit straighter, "Willy, you can't be actin' like this for a first day. I don't want this makin' life harder for you at school. You know they'll hold this against you…" Beau looked uncomfortable.
Will frowned, "what else am I supposed to do? Just take it? It ain't right and I don't care what they think. I don't need em to like me." Will knew he was arguing to argue, but damnit he thought his dad would at least understand this.

Beau sighed again and nodded absently, "Willy just keep your head down and get through detention." Will flinched a bit at that. Shit, if Hannibal is involved detention won't be easy either. Does he know about Hannibal?

"And stay away from that Lecter kid, his uncle is the one paying my checks. I am still waitin' on that call. God, Willy if we get a cut from this, I can't pay next month's bills… okay?" Beau emphasized the last bit, tone asking Will to at least look at him. Will felt a bit spiteful at that last bit. Why was he oddly protective of Hannibal? Is it because of what they have already been through? Because Hannibal was just as lonely as him?

Will huffed out angrily, "Ms. Smith left you a bowl of jambalaya, it's in the fridge." Will dismissed his dad, feeling Beau's sad eyes on his face before the man quietly left. Gently shutting the door and Will wanted to scream. His emotions were all over the place, and he HATED it. He was frustrated with himself and his father, both of them were great at being pushed around. "Don't rock the boat, Willy," Beau would say when any issue came up. Will

felt restricted and contained to this small existence of quiet pressure. Even the Smiths were a bitter escape from his lifestyle, and Will feared Hannibal would be too. Hannibal would become something bittersweet and unattainable because of Will simply being Will.

He leaned back on his squeaky bed and grabbed the only pillow on his bed, squeezing it to his chest as he stared out. He listened to his dad warming leftovers and walking outside, probably to bullshit with the other blue-collar workers. Will felt the sinking pangs of shame because of how he treats his dad. Beau is doing the best he can, this is a big deal, but Will can’t help but lash out. The pressure of being something permanent here while battling the fear of leaving too? It was all, once again, too much and he didn't know what to think. Will toed off his shoes and clothes, sitting in his boxers and dropping to the bed. He kept staring out and above to the night sky as his mind swirled with contradictions, frustration, and regret. And it was the soft numbing feeling of loneliness that cradled him asleep.

Chapter End Notes

SORRY! Sorry for not posting sooner, I had a minor hand procedure to both of my hands and then had my second Covid shot, so needless to say I was pretty useless for awhile. But! In that time I was mapping out the next chapters of this story, so fear not they will be coming in quicker!
The next chapter will involve our boys spending more time together and more conversations! I have been practicing bantering and dialogue to get this right or "natural"
Again, I take constructive criticism, so if you would like to see any changes or a certain topic to appear between the two I can take that into consideration! Also, I tried shortening my paragraphs to make it easier to read, let me know if it works!

Stay Schnazzy ;)

Wendigos and Ravenstags

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will learn more about the other
Hannibal fans his quietly growing obsession with Will
and
They share some darker thoughts and ponderings

Chapter Notes

Howdy ya'll
Song that inspired this chapter would be Sit Next to Me by Foster the People
Hope ya like it, added more dialogue and am still tampering with my paragraph styling.
This is told in Hannibal's POV

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal made his way swiftly down the hall towards Miss Harper's office for their Tuesday appointment, and he was already tired of it. He hadn't spoken to the woman, but she grated on his nerves in an entirely unnecessary inconvenience kind of way. Hannibal adjusted his bag's strap and gently knocked upon her office door before being called in. He stood before his usual uncomfortable chair until she noticed him still standing and beckoned him to sit, honestly her ability to forget Hannibal's mannerisms only further proved his point she did not actually care or pay attention to him. Hannibal didn't want her to fully focus on him, no that would cause even more problems, but he at least expected her to retain a certain level of professionalism.

Miss Harper adjusted her Old Navy cardigan and plastered on her usual nervous smiles. "SO! Any luck on the 'making friends' front? I completely understand if you would much rather go ahead and move onto the group sessions, but I feel you will hide in them."

Hannibal cocked his head to the right thinking about this. She seemed at a loss on what to do with him, they all were, and that was okay. It meant they were vulnerable to persuasion and opportunities he might present. How could he show progress on his supposed "socializing" without giving away too much? Will accepted his request for friendship, but that still wasn't set in stone between them. Too little time for Will to go before the school's counselor and testify that he and Hannibal were genuine friends. More likely Will just felt that he owed Hannibal. That wouldn't do before the adults. No, Hannibal had to show progress in a way that was not dependent on Will. He cleared his throat.

“Yes, I have acquainted myself with others and have felt detention a good motivator for my recent misdemeanor. I believe there is someone in the works of friendship, but I am not certain yet. Therefore, I have asked to have lunch on the lawn with them.” He finished with a gentle smile, one he stole from Lady Murasaki, and sat back. Waiting to see how his performance was taken.
Miss Harper’s eyes were wide, making her appear more owlish than normal. She coughed and adjusted herself nervously and nodded. Then, once processing what anomality happened before her, actually smiled in disbelief.

“Hannibal, I’m speechless! Yes… I thought detention might be uh, good for you too. And I am proud of you initiating contact with another student!” She grew with enthusiasm that her ridiculous plan of Hannibal ever being ‘friendly’ with the sluggish pigs she calls students seems to be working. “Will I meet this possible friend?” A gleam in false success.

Hannibal nodded simply and sighed, appearing nervous. Something vulnerable to make her feel like her job is actually needed. “I hope so, they are quite standoffish.”

“Well, you are already doing great by offering lunch, keep being open and I’m sure they’ll come around for you!” Miss Harper was cheery and humming. “Honestly Hannibal this is great, I believe you earned an early release from this meeting. Go enjoy your day and I am looking forward to seeing your new friend come Friday morning!” She beamed at him as he stood to grab his bag. Hannibal offered the same polite smile and quietly thanked her before exiting the office.

Hannibal lets out a true sigh once he’s in the hall and decides that even his most mundane of performances seem to ring true, and his mask is getting better, the person suit he crafts is being fitted and neater details filling in the blurry spots between human and monster. A loud slam the hall over draws his attention, and he strolls around the corner to see Will slouched on the tile floor. Papers are strewn about, and fellow students stare at him in a mixture of pity and indifference. The imbeciles from yesterday are already at the opposite end laughing obnoxiously from their recent shake down. Hannibal makes his way over to Will.

Will seems to be lost in his own world, knelt with his arms firmly wrapped around knees and hunched over. Will rocked slowly back and forth, to probably calm his rapid breathing and heartbeat. Hannibal could smell the overwhelming anxiety and despair it was stale and pungent like rotting wood. He placed a hand on Will’s back causing the smaller teen to flinch before slowly looking up at Hannibal.
Will looked ashamed of himself and seemed to snap back into his environment, quickly picking himself back up and gathering loose pages. “Sorry I just…” he grimaced and didn’t finish the sentence. Hannibal leaned down to help him gather papers which seemed to make Will panic again. “Shit, sorry, it’s okay I’ve got this.”
Hannibal gently frowned and shook his head, “Will, let me help.”

Will gulped, a nervous tic, and kept silent until he and Hannibal had cleaned the mess. Will shoved them back into his locker. Hannibal noticed that the dial lock was clipped clean off and crude insults and homophobic slurs were written all over the inside with marker. He felt his own anger rear it’s head and whisper murderous actions in Hannibal ear, almost seductively.

“Destroy them… Break their hands, bone by bone, then rip out their tongues… Leave them tied up on display, the same crude words carved into their skin before all… For Will…” Hannibal had to blink. This was odd, this wasn’t how he usually pondered violence.

Will gulped rather loudly and Hannibal realized he had been staring at the words for awhile now, and Will at him with worry. “Hannibal, it’s okay, I’m just sorry. I-I didn’t mean for this to involve you…” At first, he was confused at Will’s words until realization dawned on him.

“Why is this okay?” This seemed to startle Will, and Hannibal found he missed the defiant anger he witnessed when Will fought Matt.

“B-because I’m used to it, I mean, uh it’s not an accepted thing but…” Hannibal frowned at this.

“Will that still does not explain why it’s okay. Being ‘used to it’ still doesn’t make their behavior or words okay.” Will looked more uncomfortable with Hannibal’s intense attention. Hannibal wasn’t going to let up, if this small teen were to be his ‘friend,’ his only friend, then he is to be an equal. Equals to Hannibal do not let inferior pigs get away with such rude actions.

Will twitched and continued to look away, quiet. Hannibal sighed again, really, he needs to stop it’s not even noon, and decided to let the subject drop for the moment. “Would you care to have lunch with me upon the lawn? I packed extra to share.” His voice was gentler this time.

Will seemed to relax his shoulders and nodded to Hannibal’s offer, “thank you.” Curls falling lazily cross a forever furrowed brow and such serious eyes for someone so young. Hannibal felt a very soft pang of fondness in observing Will, such an emotional creature.

Hannibal offered a polite smile, “I must go, I’ll see you then. I will be waiting for you by the doors.” Once Will nodded to this Hannibal departed. He didn’t look back, trusting Will to build himself back up.

He didn’t need Hannibal’s pity for their relationship will not tolerate it.

The lunch bell rang, and Hannibal made his way through the hungry crowds, excitedly shouting and gossiping their way to the cafeteria. He found Will at the exit doors and slowed down to observe the twitchy student. Will looked overwhelmed, vibrating on the surface, constantly looking over his shoulder for his lunch partner. Hannibal wondered if how Will would react if he didn’t show for lunch. Would Will be outraged at Hannibal’s lack of presence, or would he fall into a self-deprecating pit? Would Will act like it didn’t bother him, that his expectations of Hannibal were almost nonexistent?
No, Hannibal knew Will was already growing an attachment to him, Hannibal protected Will and was now about to feed him delicious food. Yes, Hannibal mustn’t dally and deprive himself Will’s first tasting of true nutrients and art. Not whatever chemical concoction was being served.

Hannibal walked closer in plain sight, and the visible relief Will showed in spotting him left Hannibal feeling lighter and needed. He walked up to Will opening the door for the teen, who

blushed in embarrassment. So reactive.

They settled under the sun on the higher hilly section of the lawn, a park bench all to the teens. Hannibal unloaded his lunch cooler, pulling out delicate Tupperware and utensils. Will watched in anticipation. “Monte Carlo clubs on toasted croissants with baby Swiss, provolone, and roasted honey ham with a tart black berry dipping jam. As well as a side of fresh spring salad with a matching vinaigrette.” Will’s stomach growled after Hannibal spoke causing Will’s ears to burn and Hannibal to actually grin.

“S-sorry I didn’t have breakfast.” Hannibal tsked quietly at this, which made Will break his bashful mood and smile. “Did you ‘tsk’ me? You know you’re not an old man, right?” Hannibal hummed in response while plating their lunches. “Breakfast determines how you approach your day; you mustn’t neglect this.” Which only caused Will to laugh as he picked up the flaky sandwich.

“So you don’t disagree that you’re a 50 year-old man trapped in some teen’s body?” He teased Hannibal.
Hannibal sat beside him and chose to start with his salad, watching Will’s mouth. “I will take it as a compliment, age allows one to wield class and wisdom with ease.” Will parted his lips and took a ravenous bite, immediately humming his praise with the smile still on his face. “This is sooooooooo good.”

Hannibal felt that earlier pang of fondness at the scruffy teen mixed with something a dash more obsessive. Lady Murasaki never praised his cooking, only scrutiny or a nod of approval. This was just as vibrant as the other emotions Will displayed, but this was only for Hannibal. At Hannibal’s cooking, his art and creation. Hannibal decided then that he will continue to make lunch for Will, if only to be praised.

He began to eat his own meal as they sat in companionable silence observing the lawn and past it’s gates, the New Orleans old town bustling streets. Will finished his sandwich quickly, then with more restraint, his spring salad. Hannibal appreciated that the boy ate everything given.

“Where did you learn to cook like that?” Will kept looking at the scenes surrounding them, but Hannibal found more satisfaction in turning his sights to Will’s expressive face. His curls now had hints of red and auburn under the bright sun, it was soft.

“My aunt and the cooks she hired guide me. But mostly I teach myself.” Hannibal leaned, resting his chin on his palm still watching his companion. “I spend most of the late evening experimenting and perfecting recipes. Thus far, only basics.”

Will nodded along and huffed, “well, you’re amazing. That was great.”

“What about you?”

“Huh?” Will looked over at Hannibal’s ear.

“What are you amazing at?” Hannibal spoke softly, not wanting to scare Will off.

Will took a moment to contemplate. “um… I don’t know if I’m amazing at it, but I really like to fish. Pa showed me how to fly fish two summers ago and I really liked it, so… I hope I can be more than average.”

Hannibal kept a relaxed and lazily expression towards his companion, Will had seemed bashful again. Hannibal knew fishing was a patient sport, one that was mostly up to lady luck to determine if a fish is at the end of the line. There were other tricks to it to make your chances higher, but it was a gamble that Hannibal had no patience or want for. He imagined it was something peaceful for Will, wading out into the stream in the cool quiet, no people around.

Hannibal is about to ask Will another question when the bell rings, signifying the 5-minute warning before the next class. They both stand to pack and grab their things, making their way back into the building. Hannibal and Will remain silent but close walking down the hall until Will stops before one of the biology classrooms. “See you at detention?” Hannibal smiles something small and nods before parting to head his own way. What a pleasant lunch, time had escaped him listening and watching Will. For as explosive as the boy can be, he is also calming in those fragile moments shared between them.

The next three periods of the day crawl by and Hannibal is already anticipating more conversations with Will. They hadn’t spoken of anything extraordinary, but it was about the opportunities. The potential of digging further into more taboo topics, and that required a certain level of trust and familiarity between them, something they haven’t quite reached yet.

Hannibal reached his locker and undialed the lock to rummage inside for his remaining things. He paused, there would need to be precautions from now on. He could very easily be a victim from the pigs that tarnished Will’s locker. By choosing Will first, it seems they view him the most vulnerable. Better for Hannibal to start plotting now that he knows their tactics…

Hannibal arrives at the library finding the grouchy librarian already nose deep in a crossword puzzle drinking a diet soda. How horribly mundane.
A “pssst” catches his attention and he looks directly up at the overhead banister. Will is looking down at him, big bright eyes blinking, and gestures for Hannibal to join him on the second level. Hannibal does not hesitate and quietly makes his way up the carpeted stairs that cloak his presence from the distracted supervisor. Once he’s on the second level, he sees Will waving him over to the back section past the music theory and magazine racks. Behind these sections is an old office, surrounded and walled in by glass but the large plastic blinds are pulled down and tight preventing one from looking in. Hannibal slips inside seeing Will sitting in the center on an old grey shaggy carpet. “Check this out!” He whispers excitedly.

Hannibal places his bag on the table and moves to sit down beside Will, peering over his shoulder. He was close, closer than lunch, and now could actually smell Will. A warm breeze accented by saltwater spray. Honeysuckle, something gentle and only of summertime. And a healthy dose of Earth, sheer wildness. Hannibal was enchanted by this, how could Will smell of a season? Of memories of running bear foot through hot rich dirt between towering oaks, the distant sound of a girl’s giggles as he chases her.

Will had shifted, drawing Hannibal out of his trance to actually listen to the boy.

“-and that’s how I got in here! Look it’s all the restricted books and novels. I can’t believe they haven’t gotten rid of em.” Will was showing off several books, some simply outdated and others to be deemed to graphic for today’s youth. Hannibal spotted a rather large textbook under a pile of old magazines. He gently shimmied it out and blew the dust off, revealing a black and grey cover of a forest with gothic fonts. “Mysterious Myths and Monstrosities?” Will murmured while reading the title aloud.

Hannibal opened it upon his lap, peering in at the beautiful illustrations. Creatures of pure imagination powerfully pranced across the pages, whispering witchcraft and lore to the two teens. Will was definitely intrigued, because he leaned closer to Hannibal, bumping their shoulders. Hannibal kept flipping until he stopped on an illustration of a black stag.

“Look, the feathers…” Will pointed, whispering into Hannibal's ears as they observed the image, one much more unsuspecting of evil intent.

“It appears more majestic than monster.” Hannibal did not know why this was so important. He flicked his gaze over to Will, to his odd dimples and quirked brow. He had such youth that Hannibal amused himself thinking that Will will forever be stuck in his boyish looks. Despite a strong jaw, his eyes damned his growth.

“The Ravenstag is a creature of nightmares and foresight. The creature haunts the dreams of those in warning, helping make connections and bringing forth the deepest secrets of those asleep. While the least gruesome looking of monsters, the Ravenstag is a predator without haste and will lure their prey, exposing and using all vulnerabilities gathered from their nightmares… shit, this book also tells you spells and how to summon/prevent them.”

Hannibal listened intently to the description. “Do you think those plagued by the Ravenstag are able to remember once they wake up?”

“… I think so. I never remember my pleasant dreams, only the nightmares.”

“What nightmares haunt you, Will? Do they spill secrets and make connections that frighten you?”

Will shuddered, eyes closed, “no something worse… My secrets never are spilt, and the connections won’t come together, so I’m stuck in place as everyone moves forward…” He opened his eyes again, startlingly vibrant like lightning storm on the bay. Those storms look at Hannibal’s. “What haunts you?”

“The same, my past embraces me too tightly to evolve. To change into something more suited for the present.”

“You don’t fear being left behind?”

“There’s no one left to leave.”

Hannibal had spoken without emotion, the monster in him wounded at his own words. He didn’t bother with a mask, Will was already unwrapping his soul in the briefest of moments. Will’s eyes had grown watery, the storm ready to unleash it’s rain.

Hannibal looked down to the book, he didn't need pity… There's no room for it.

He flipped the pages as they sat in an uncomfortable silence until Hannibal paused on another creature that captured his eye. A tall and lanky thing, but lean and wrapped in stretched muscle. It looked not quite like a man, but something ancient and mummified. Fingers extending and bone sharpening past stretched skin to form claws, a defined ribcage that looked like the flesh scraped over when the creature would breathe. It's face wasn't made of flesh or muscle, but rather extended bone like that of a coyote. The teeth much more deadly, with dark sockets. This time Hannibal read the description.

"The Wendigo is the harbinger of endless death and hunger, an appetite that will never be satiated. They roam endlessly through thick forests and mountains, an invasive species no matter the environment. A Wendigo keeps one clawed foot in Hell and the other in the mortal realm, stuck between the two cursing its existence. They are thought to be the perfect predator, hunting, and leaving behind wastelands."

"That's spooky…" Will had stopped looking at Hannibal and instead peered at the image.

"Why do you think the Wendigo is like this?"

Will hummed and tilted his head before responding, "because of what they lost? Hunger is more than food… They're not committed to leaving this world and settling into hell because they're still hunting what they lost."

"Will they ever find it?"

"… No, they're lost too. I doubt a Wendigo remembers what it misses, or hungers for. Just knows it's hungry."
Hannibal pondered this. "You know them so well?"

"er no, just imagining it. I mean, being torn between two worlds has to be painful."

"The Wendigo is greedy." Hannibal smirked to himself; he felt a kinship. He turned to Will, "do you think the Ravenstag haunts the Wendigo?"
Will contemplated this, "to bring forth what the Wendigo is starving for?"

Hannibal nods, "and the cruelest part is the famish creature won't remember when he wakes up, what his fellow monster was reminding him of. Only the feeling left behind." They both looked at each other, something silent shared.

"How tragic."

Chapter End Notes

YAY
pls pls pls let me know if these dialogues are confusing or just boring? I can always go

back to the drawing board lol, I kind of let it naturally flow, then test it aloud. All constructive criticism welcomed,
aside from that thank you for reading!
I will be posting chapter 6 soon, I had to redo some major story lines because I am still testing the order of events/what events happen, but either way I am excited!
Next chapter will be wrapping up this first week of the boys together, and we should see time speed up a bit so we can get to the more exciting parts.

as always,
stay schnazzy! ;)

You Can Use My Mask

Chapter Summary

Hannibal makes a promise.

Chapter Notes

Hey ya'll sorry it has been awhile, very excited for this chapter because we are starting to really speed things up and more action will follow. Also we meet a new character in this chapter, let me know what ya'll think!
I was listening to Animal by Sir Chloe, Twisted by MISSIO, and Teenagers by MCR
I think this is one of my longest chapters yet.
As always, let me know what ya think, the comments have so far been amazing and I love reading what parts you guys enjoyed or are anticipating. I did not reread through all of this, I am lazy. idc, shun me ;-;

Enjoy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The rest of the week was an odd experience for Hannibal…

Each day Hannibal and Will would talk and spend lunches together, Hannibal found a quiet excitement in cooking for the teen. He would meticulously pack and arrange meals that Will has never tried or certain sides that received praise. Hannibal would always wait to watch Will take the first bite, his usually bitten lips closing around something Hannibal had created, and Will would sigh in happiness
savoring every bit. It was addicting to get that kind of attention through his art, and Will was the perfect audience to try all new ideas and recipes out on.

Aside from Will's reactions, their conversations were pleasant too. Well, not exactly "pleasant," but more taboo, fulfilling, and had Hannibal reviewing the exchange long after they depart from detention. Hannibal knew Will was intelligent, just terribly awkward, and not the most articulate, but he kind of… liked it. Always thinking in complexities and intricate details Hannibal was often lost in his own mind, but Will knew what he was pondering and could break apart the extra details into simple pieces. Not that it was always welcomed, the teen had a habit of teasing Hannibal and that took some getting use to. Hannibal was not used to being teased, mostly avoided.

Essentially, Hannibal found himself actively looking for a scruffy boy with wild curls and odd twitches. And every time he would catch himself and frown. Attachments were not ideal. Will needed to be attached, even dependent on Hannibal for this "friendship" to seem genuine, but how can he be anticipating someone's presence so much? It has only been a handful of days and Will had wormed into his mind and proceeded to make a home out of the front of Hannibal's brain. The sheer audacity of the runt had Hannibal both amused and concerned.

Hannibal was reflecting on all of this when his car rolled to a stop before the school. He quietly exited the vehicle, prepping himself for his next "performance" with Miss Harper this Friday morning. He adjusted his strap and proceeded into the building, outer mask falling fiercely in place to make anyone hesitate in approaching him. Of course, that didn't stop the twitchy teen from rounding the corner and flashing his crooked smile at Hannibal's blank face… the nerve.

"Hey! Where are you heading to?"

"Good morning to you too, William. I have an appointment with Miss Harper."

Will gagged and pouted at Hannibal, "Ya know, you only call me William when you're annoyed with me? Honestly, and here I was about to make your day a whole lot easier." Will was smug, and Hannibal wanted to wipe it off his face… Maybe he should say he didn't bring lunch for him? No, the runt was too skinny, cannot use that threat.

"Manners and courtesy are what keep man above animals, please don't slouch." Hannibal decided to keep walking towards the guidance office as Will trailed along. Will was now grinning wider and hurried to keep up with Hannibal's long stride.

"Easy! Okay, okay, you are obviously grouchy this morning, so I'll be direct."

Hannibal looked over to Will, a faint question in his blank appearance, "Yes, please be direct."

"I am going to the appointment with you! Group therapy would make me grouchy too, so Imma save you this time from therapeutic doom." Will was triumphant in this, but Hannibal noticed the way he fiddled with his shirt sleeve relentlessly. Will was nervous too, and Hannibal wondered why? He slowed down and turned to the smaller teen.

"Are you trying to pay off a debt to me?"

Will froze at this and frowned to himself, looking anywhere but at Hannibal's face. "Well, I know you tolerate me, and that you're just keeping me around for this appointment." He fisted his hands and looked at Hannibal's right ear, something fierce in his eyes. "I would much rather be a part of this 'deal' than be blind sided afterwards. Come Monday, I do not know if you'll ever look at me again…"
Hannibal could feel his pupils dilate. Will was being so vulnerable, a shaking mess with fists ready to strike Hannibal or perhaps even his own mouth from revealing more. The teen wasn't as attached as he thought? No, Will was growing dependent on Hannibal's presence, but he was used to abandonment and now was trying to take control of the situation. It was

honorable to face that kind of rejection and keep carrying out the deed. But Hannibal was struggling with his own want, the want of Will by his side. Even he knew it would be 'safe' to take Will's out, but he was not so sure he wanted it.

Hannibal decided that Will was still useful, whether that is in persuading pesky adults or simply keeping Hannibal company, Will was a resource still full of potential. It would not be wise to throw him away now, besides… That dark streak from the beginning of the week was still a haunting curiosity that needed investigation.

"Will, I am not abandoning you." He spoke softly, not to spook Will, who had at this point been locked in his own mental anguish waiting for Hannibal's response.

Will looked at Hannibal's eyes then, swallowing with a faint peach blush coloring his face, making the dusting of freckles from the summer sun more prominent. He was cute. And distracting, "Come, you'll have me late for this appointment." With that they both continued silently to the office, entering on the dot.

Miss Harper was standing by the file cabinet, staring owlishly in surprise at the two misfits. "Hannibal and?" Will was staring at her certificates hanging upon the wall when he answered in response, "Will Graham. I'm Hannibal's friend." He still wore that blush and voice barely above a whisper.

Hannibal gave a polite pointed smile at Miss Harper, "I believe I informed you before that I would have a friend to present this morning." The counselor nodded to herself and sat at her desk.
"Yes, well, Will how are you and Hannibal getting along?"

Will fidgeted at this, his bravado from earlier in the morning gone and now seemed reluctant to speak to the woman. Hannibal simply observed the exchange, letting Will decide how this conversation will proceed.

"Hannibal and I… we're good, he's nice to me." At that Will snuck a quick look at Hannibal, something shy. It was interesting behavior.

"That's nice," the dumb woman said redundantly, "very nice, ah, will you two be getting along for the rest of the school year?"

Hannibal spoke up at this, "no, for longer than the school year."

Will swallowed aloud again and nodded silently along, ah, his face was more crimson now.

Miss Harper gave her best patronizing teacher's smile and the rest of the appointment went swimmingly, with Hannibal seeing how much darker he could make Will blush by talking about their now, legitimate, friendship.

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After the morning's excitement, Hannibal was pleased to have a calm and normal rest of school day. It gave him time to think about Will, and then, accept that the blushing, fidgety

runt had “grown” on
him. Now if only Will could actually grow, at this rate Hannibal will have a crick in his neck for how often he’s looking down for the small teen. The lunch bell rang, and Hannibal was ready to enjoy another lunch on the lawn.

He made his way back to their lockers when he heard shouting. Will was being cornered by two grunts from Matt’s group, they were trying to pick and pinch at Will. A reaction, something explosive like before is what they wanted, but Hannibal watched Will observe their idiocy with a cool mask of indifference. It was cold and blank causing the jeering to die in the two bullies. They weren’t sure on how to proceed and instead called Will a few homophobic slurs and slunk off down the hall. Hannibal did not bother to follow their exit but was fascinated with how Will pulled off his mask, heaving and falling to his knees trembling at the effort.

Will was mimicking Hannibal… That same blank look was what Hannibal saw in the mirror every morning and used to frighten off adults and vultures alike. It was extraordinary, how could Will fill Hannibal’s face so well? Transfer over every harsh angle and reptilian gaze onto his own softer and warm face, Hannibal wanted to see it again. If the interaction hadn’t lasted a few minutes, he would have thought he imagined Will’s expression, or lack of.

Will’s faint cough is what snapped Hannibal from his mind and to walk over to the trembling heap. He crouched down and placed a hand in front of Will’s line of sight, murmuring quietly to the frightened teen, “you were very brave, Will.”

Will sniffed and stared at Hannibal’s hand with fierce intensity, he didn’t respond but quieted his sniffling. Hannibal rotated his hand slowly then began to rub his thumb to his two forefingers, a circling motion. Will began to imitate it, feeling the texture of his own fingers and the repetitive motions. Will let out a slow exhale then finally looked up at Hannibal, eyes wide and red rimmed with unshed tears.

“I’m tired of being scared.”

“You did well hiding, it was intriguing.”

Will huffed and continued his hand motions, “you saw?” Voice so feather light.

Hannibal nodded, “yes, you scared them off.”

“I wanted to be like you…” Will looked ashamed of saying this, like he might hurt Hannibal’s feelings. Hannibal preened under the words instead.

“You became me Will. You can always use my mask.”

This must have been the longest they held eye contact, Will’s eyes turned a foamy green when he was afraid, like the moss that grew on the side of ponds and newborn stems breaching the ground in spring. They sat in their quiet bubble together in the hall, both hesitant to break it. Eventually they did have to leave, but it was a silent affair with Will gently holding onto his sleeve and Hannibal feeling possessive of his friend. Of someone

who not only understood his words, but also his expressions. It was addicting to be seen and used as someone else's shield for strength, the last time he felt this was in Lithuania.

They sat at the usual park bench, Hannibal did not give his usual introductory flare, allowing Will to quietly retreat into himself while Hannibal watched over him. Took care of him. Will did not let Hannibal leave his side until next period, and even then, his tears threatened to emerge, leaving Hannibal automatically murmuring a quiet promise to take him to his next classes. This seemed to relax Will, who reluctantly agreed.

Detention being over, Hannibal was not pleased to let an hour of his usual time with Will go, but by the end of the day Will was back and a part of the living world. He seemed more bashful and approached Hannibal at the gates of the school entrance. "Hey… W-what are you doing tomorrow?"

Hannibal blinked, "my schedule is clear." He suddenly felt like teasing his shy friend.

Will nodded to this and kept staring at the passing feet of other students, "would you like to- I mean if you don't that is perfectly okay, I mean it's y-your choice- but do you wanna go to the docks with me?"

Hannibal gave a feline's smile and leaned a bit in Will's space, "my, Will you charm me. May I ask what awaits us at the docks?"

Will fidgeted and frowned at Hannibal's teasing tone, "anything, I mean they have street food, ah but I dunno if you like street food, probably not. But they have swimming a-and I usual fish…" Will hesitated then shifted to the side, "do you know how to fish?"

Hannibal hummed, "no, I'm more of a hunter."

Will let out a self-deprecating huff, "shit, this isn't going well."

"How did you envision this conversation?"

"A lot less rambling and more smiles, but I seemed to have forgotten that I am socially deficient spazz and you're a pretentious weirdo who doesn't like street food-who doesn't like street food?!" Now Will was grumbling and Hannibal's smile only grew wider.

"Someone who does not want grease and intestinal worms in their body."

"Hey, the grease is delicious and the worms, well, we just don't talk about that." Will was shifting again and glared at Hannibal's shoes this time. "Are you gonna go with me or not?"

Hannibal took a step closer, able to smell how the Earthy tones to Will's scent grew sharper with annoyance. "Since you are so persistent to obtain my company, then I suppose I can tolerate your heathen activities." Smug in his tone causing Will to flinch, realizing how close they had gotten.

"Heathen?! Who was the one that jumped into a fight because he can't make friends like a normal person?" Will pouted and crossed his arms.

“Do propose that we are both heathens, and comparisons of what is ‘normal’ should be taken off the metaphorical table?”

“Only if you agree to share a jumbo dog with me.”

“Will, that’s disgusting.”

“Me and my supposed intestinal worms disagree.”

“Now you’re being crude. I will try something, but I get to choose.”

Will grinned in triumph, “deal, you live in the old district, right? That’s closer to the docks, so I will just pick you up and we can walk there together?”

“Yes, I am presuming the afternoon is when you wish to be there?”

“Hells yeah! I’ll bring my fishing pole, this’ll be fun-thank you.” Will’s peachy blush returned, causing the scruffy runt to fidget and scoot away.

Hannibal nodded, spotting his driver pull up. “I have to leave; do you need a ride home?” Will was shaking his head to this immediately, “no, I’m actually close to here… see you tomorrow?”

Hannibal’s eyes crinkled and he simply hummed and waved goodbye as he walked off, feeling that the day was successful. The drive back to the manor was uneventful as well as the first hour back in his room.

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A knock on Hannibal’s door had him pause in his homework, anatomy of the arm and shoulders, and he stood to open the door. Chiyoh stood stoic and silent, before speaking in hushed tones, “Master Lecter requests your immediate presence in his office.” Hannibal nodded and felt the hairs on his neck stand.

He had not spoken to his uncle in weeks, the man holes himself up in his office or at upper class clubs. Any request for Hannibal’s audience never bodes well, because quite simply, his uncle is terrified of Hannibal.

The large office doors loomed, but Hannibal opened them without hesitation. There in the smoky room sat the barge of a man, prominent cheek bones and an aristocratic air, bent over his desk going through papers and ledgers. Hannibal disliked the stench of his uncle’s cigars they were musky and tarnished. The doors closed behind him, and Hannibal stood before the mahogany desk, spine straight and attentive sphinx stare, waiting for the challenge.

His uncle grimaced and only observed Hannibal through the bifocals on the end of his nose. Robert Lecter made a show of smudging his cigar, drumming his thick ringed fingers on the other hand against the desk. Slowly leaning back in the wide set leather seat, crinkling quietly. He let out the last puff of smoke from his pinched mouth.

“So… Your counselor called me to tell me the ‘good news.’” His voice was rough from smoking and, usually, yelling at his employees. “You’re friends with the help, huh?”

Hannibal kept his face perfectly neutral, containing the twisted feral rage he gets around his piggish uncle. Tilting his head, he kept silent, his uncle never actually wanted a response.

“Will Graham, son of Beau Graham, our current glorified janitor…” He stood and slowly stalked around the desk, trying to make himself appear bigger. Width, he certainly was a wall, but Hannibal was lanky and stood eye-to-eye with the older man. Hannibal was not intimidated, and his uncle was quietly steaming at the lack of reaction. It amused Hannibal, he thought back to earlier in the day watching Will stand up to the bullies, the only difference is Hannibal does not need to hide behind a mask or pretend to be fearless.

He was in control, and this was simply a test of it.

“Did you know some of our current shipments have been going missing? Oh yes, petty things from tools to a whole cargo crate of products. All missing along Beau’s cleaning route, and now his beggar son is attaching himself to you? The Lecter heirs?” Robert’s voice grew more menacing.

Hannibal tracked his uncle’s movements and continued to stand still.

“You’re finally competent enough to use someone to get yourself out of those damn appointments, but it’s that thief’s son? I am disappointed in you. You could not have hooked someone of higher social standing? The only reason I allowed you to attend a public school was because of how many of our business partners’ children attended.” Robert sneered and slammed a heavy fist against the desk. Leaning forward to invade Hannibal’s space.

“You are NOT allowed to have any contact or relationship with Graham, understood?”

Hannibal felt his monster stretch and grow under his skin, electricity racing up and down his person. Hannibal could hear bones snapping somewhere in the back of his mind, like a memory, and he wanted to snarl. Hannibal wanted to roar and ram his pathetic uncle’s head through the letter opener, use the cigar scissors to clip off each fat finger. Oh, how he patiently waits, waits for his 18th birthday, when he is no longer a ward in need of his uncle’s money.

For a brief moment, the mere gory fantasy of murdering his uncle soothes him, but it was only the moment.

“Uncle, you would condemn me my only friend, for your own social biases?”

Robert’s face heated and he seemed to hesitate, noticing the way that his nephew watched him with poisonous intent.
“Uncle, what power do you hold? If Will is indeed the son of a thief, I will respect your wishes, however, Will is mine. Mine to spend my time with and mine to tarnish my ‘spotless’ reputation for.” Hannibal’s voice was low, eyes never blinking, a swirling cauldron of crimson.

Robert leaned away from the young man and coughed in his hand, straightening his lapels, and putting the desk between them. “I shall find who is stealing, and you will see it is none other than the bastard Grahams. I will have you regretting your defiance.”

Hannibal allowed his snake of a smile show and nodded, “Yes, and I shall find out if you tamper or torment the Grahams in any way. As the next in line, and only Lecter heir, I dictate the outcome of this family. Proceed with caution, dearest uncle.”
With that Hannibal left, head held high and stalking out like a panther, his monster still not satisfied by the disrespect and insult thrown from his uncle. The possessiveness within him was outraged at the threats made against Will, and the sudden thought of him being taken away is utterly unbearable.

No, that will not happen. Hannibal told Will, did he not?

“I am not going to abandon you.” Hannibal quietly murmured to the hallway, making his way to the stairs, and leaving the manor all together.

Hannibal needed to hunt.

Chapter End Notes

Fun Fact, I cannot smell. No, it is not because of COVID, I lost my sense of smell when I hit puberty. I am completely bullshitting my way through what Hannibal can smell, and my search history of what "earth" smells like is looking freaky. PLease, please, please help a homie out and correct me/add your own input so I can understand.

I wanted Robert to be an asshole, because *plot* and *conflict* are best when authority figures are assholes! Again, lemme know whatcha think and if there is anything you would like to read in the future. I am currently putting together some one-shots because I am ambitious and dumb, so keep an eye out for those.

Ignore the dumb message that keeps popping below, idk how to get rid of that lol.
stay schnazzy.

Anticipating Problems

Chapter Notes

This took forever to write, I actually had to split this chapter into two parts, so the second will come soon.
Warning, Will deals with some intense insecurities that will proceed to become more aggressive and emotionally abusive, so be aware.
Aside from that, please enjoy this chapter and let me know what you think!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sweat rolled off Will's brow as he climbed the cement steps onto the creaking porch and through his flimsy front door. There was barely any relief out of the sun, the home had turned into an oven. Will threw his bookbag on the couch before moving to open up all the windows in the small front rooms and wandered into the kitchen to see if they had any bottles of water left. Snatching one, Will let his mind stroll off and haunt what happened earlier in the day. Of how Hannibal behaved, and god, what he said too. The guy was looming, and his presence was festering in all corners of Will's mind. It was difficult not to notice, even while having a melt down in a hallway, how Hannibal's eyes took that predatory look.

It reminded Will of the video played during his biology class, they were observing the different niches flora and fauna had in their environment, of how their behavior determined the cycle of life, death, and decay. The video showed a python slithering about in a tropical habitat and slithering across a deer. The boring narrator of the video was droning on about the species of both animals, but what caught Will was how the python was sizing up the unsuspecting deer. The snake was intelligent, calculating whether it could gorge itself of the prey.

Hannibal was like that python; his footsteps unnervingly silent and reptilian gaze left no room for expression. Will takes that back, there was expression, but it only flitted back and forth between predatory and curious. Any smiles or frowns were controlled and small, polite, and unsuspecting for those that were presented with the teen's mask. Sometimes those physical lies irritated Will. Why did Hannibal constantly manipulate himself around Will?

But that can't be entirely true. The few brief moments Hannibal did not use that stony mask, the hairs on Will's neck would rise and the alarms in his mind sounded off. Saying that something was unnatural about his friend.

Will sipped from his water when scratching on the screen door caught his attention. He peered over and was greeted with a furry face and panting smile of his favorite neighborhood mutt. A terrier of some sort was whining at Will causing his face to break out into a grin as he moved to open the door and let in his furry friend. He leaned down and allowed excited licks and kisses to cover his chin as he scratched behind two ears.

“Hey Scrappy.” The terrier was missing a few toes and had wiry fur leaving him looking like a very worn teddy bear. Scrappy also had a collection of little white blotches that covered his flank and small tail, an utterly charming stray.

Will wasted no time pulling out some older Tupperware to grab the kibble he bought for the afternoons that Scrappy wandered over. Will had tried to convince the dog to just live here permanently with him, but the mutt would get antsy staying indoors too long. He had a free spirit about him, so Will just made the most of the moments he could keep the playful dog by his side.

Will carried the bowl outside and had Scrappy close on his heels, tongue flopping about and tail wagging. They sat on the porch, watching the neighborhood husbands and fathers slowly making their way back home to their families. Once Scrappy was finished with the kibble, Will poured the rest of his water into the bowl. In an odd way, he felt like Hannibal. Feeding some stray that managed to grow attached and would keep coming back. Is this how Hannibal saw him?

“Will, I am not abandoning you.” Those six simple words echoed around Will’s head, and they meant the absolute weight of the world to him. And that was terrifying. It allowed Will’s gut to start bubbling his insecurities, but the worst was the fragile glimmer of hope that Hannibal was telling the truth. It could not be out of pity, Will learned that Hannibal detested the condescending emotion, and the teen was forever locked in apathy to those around him. Will could not escape his own absorbing mind. It grabbed at everything without permission, almost greedy to drown Will in someone else’s problems and personalities.

Perhaps that is why being around Hannibal actually left room for himself. There was space for Will to feel on his own and not question if his emotions and decisions were actually his own. And it felt… powerful to be Hannibal in that hallway. He could detach himself completely from fear, from being civil or a victim.

Yet that spell ended soon too, and he was left with his knees hitting the hard concrete floor and all that hidden fear came out to haunt his mind, and an even crueler voice whispered venom.

‘Of course, you can’t stand on your own.’

‘You’re weak, and he knows it too.’

‘He is going to get bored and leave you who wants a victim as a friend? A complete pushover.’

‘You can’t stand with Hannibal. You showed that all day and will only disappoint him in the future.’

‘Better to leave now, coward.’

Will winced and brought his hands to his hair, to tug at his skull and feel the pressure and pain. Scrappy rested his chin on Will’s knee, silent and sensing Will’s self-inflicting stress. A

frustrated sigh left his lips and he tried to slow his breaths, heart already fired up and ready to leave Will a panicky mess.

He did not want to believe these thoughts; they offer a dark road with only one end. Will did not want any of it.

Like an angel to distract him of his thoughts, sweet Ally stomped her feet to get Will's attention, releasing his head from a straining grip. She had a frown and scrunch to her nose, questioning Will's odd behavior. He offered her a, hopefully convincing, smile and waved. Ally took his smile at face value and skipped closer to sign about Scrappy, asking if she can pet him. The terrier was already bouncing around the girl with energy, and she giggled at the charming mutt.

They sat like that together on the porch, throwing sticks and giving belly rubs. Ally was not in her usual talkative mood, but her expression was light and content on spending the late afternoon in the company of two strays. About half an hour later, Ms. Smith was walking over to them with exhaustion on her usually lively eyes. She greeted them and spoke aloud while signing, "Hey Will, thank you for watching Ally." At the end she gave a stern look at the girl, and continued to speak, "she was not supposed to leave the house but did not listen."

Ally looked a smidge guilty, but Scrappy licking her arm had it washed away. Ms. Smith did not seem bothered by this, but she turned her tired eyes to Will. It honestly made her appear older, which was a bit alarming. Instead of signing and bringing attention to her daughter, she partially covered her mouth from the side blocking Ally's view if she looked up.

"Will, can I talk to you about something?"

Will nodded and felt a nervous spike shoot through his heart sending the organ racing.

Ms. Smith sighed looking very uneasy, "well… a few days ago one of Ally's classmates went missing. A girl named Sam and it's been chaotic. The poor girl usually takes the bus with Ally to our block, but she never even got on the bus. We still don't know if she wandered off or was taken." To this, Ms. Smith was more upset and shifted back and forth. Her eyes flickered to Ally before continuing.

"I'm worried about Ally's safety. She is pretty diligent because she has to aside from just being a little girl but…" Will understood, Ally's lack of hearing left her vulnerable.
Ms. Smith's eyes snapped something fierce back to Will, "can you please keep an eye out for Ally, or just anything suspicious? I usually get home before her bus, but something doesn't feel right about all this."

Will was already accepting this, no hesitation. He cared for Ally and her mom, they made his new life here bearable, and their kindness has been endless.

"I will watch over Ally." Ms. Smith gave a weak smile to Will and his determined tone, "Thank you, Will. I know this isn't your responsibility, but I can trust you."

Will felt his heart stutter. He felt… good, it was good to be needed and help. To repay their kindness to him with diligence in protecting Ally. At the thought, he turned to the little girl

who was racing circles with Scrappy in the front yard laughing aloud.

With that, the two did not stay for long since Ally needed a bath after rolling in the grass. Ms. Smith gave Will a grateful smile before leaving and it added another layer to the complex day he had. So, he remained seated in the New Orleans sticky heat, enjoying the dusky orange of the sky and his furry friend. Time must have left Will, because soon stars were dotting the evening and the rumble of an engine pulled to a lurching stop in the driveway.

Beau Graham clambered out of the vehicle shutting the door with his hip as he carried a bag of Chinese take-out and his toolbox. “Hey Willy, why are you still out?” His voice was gruff and worn, but after a day of working at his stable job left the older man walking with his back straight. Pride in his blue-collar work and earning a living for him and his boy.

“I brought lo mein and egg rolls.” He gave a crooked grin to his son and Will realized how hungry he was. Scrappy seemed to take this as his que to leave, so he stole another scratching from Will before trotting off to wreak havoc on the neighborhood cats and squirrels.

Will followed his dad inside where they piled into the small kitchen to eat at the fold-out table. Beau was uncapping a beer off the counter and mindlessly grumbling about traffic and the insane amount of absurd stop signs he had to suffer through. “They’re completely unnecessary.” Plopping himself across Will who had already scooped out his share from their dinner and was wolfing it down.

Will tried to imagine Hannibal eating carry-out, or even going through a fast-food joint. Will suspecting that he would burn the restaurant down before ever stepping foot inside. It made him smile. Beau catches this and quirks an eyebrow Will’s way, “whatcha smiling about, huh?” Amusement lined his voice and Will quickly schooled his expression, “nothin’.”

Beau laughed at this, “oh yeah? Is she pretty?”

Will gawked at this, letting his noodles slip through cheap chopsticks, “what?!”

Beau seemed fueled by the reaction, “see I know you got moves, Willy! Sure, you’re a little on the scrawny side, but you’ve got my rugged good looks.” At this last bit Beau waggled his eyebrows suggestively as Will flailed about.

“No! Oh my god, no!” Will felt thoroughly flustered, worst part being that now his traitor of a mind was analyzing if Hannibal is pretty. The guy had a striking face, that was sure. His straw blond hair was soft looking too, and Hannibal’s eyes would turn this pretty amber color under the sun…

Now a full blush was heating Will’s face which had Beau cackling, “okay, okay I’ll stop teasing ya.” Winking before turning his attention to his own food.

Will continued to sort through his thoughts, horrified at their conclusion that Hannibal was indeed, pretty in his own unique way like everything else. After a few minutes of silence Beau spoke again with a tone less playful, “I think there’s gonna be an investigation at work.” Will snapped his eyes up to his dad’s face to gage what this meant for them.

Beau huffed and took a bite out of an egg roll before continuing, “apparently some shipments and cargo have been goin’ missing and the bosses are in a tizzy bout it.” He shrugged, “don’t know what someone wants with a bunch of stinky tuna cans but they’re gonna interview everybody.”
Will felt that nervous needle pierce his heart again, but this time it was not content with striking Will only once and repeatedly stabbed. He fidgeted in his seat and mumbled, “are you worried?”

Beau cocked his head frowning, “now why would I be worried? The Grahams are not thieves, Willy.” He ended the discussion at that and spent the rest of their dinner silently eating. Beau finished and scooted back in his foldable chair before stretching his arms over his head and popping some joints. He yawned and stood to throw away trash and walk out the kitchen throwing, “imma shower and get some rest,” over his shoulder at Will. Will nodded to himself before finishing his own food and heading to his small room.

Will threw off his shirt and pants to settle for just underwear as sleep wear. He crawled onto the bed and flopped back, not bothering with scratchy sheets. Will peered to the night sky, air pollution blocking out most of the fainter stars in the sky with a few heavy clouds. Will hoped it would not rain. Not tonight or tomorrow, because he felt this youthful excitement in ‘hanging out’ with Hannibal.
He never got to do normal kid things, even younger he knew in some solemn way he would always be an outsider and that the other kids knew it too. Having someone to simply walk the lake beach with who wasn’t four legged and furry was a small little hope he did not usually allow himself to bother with, but everything has changed. He had Hannibal, the stiff pretentious and complete apathetic bastard he is. Will felt his lips pull into a smile as he wondered how the serious teen will dress outside of an academic function, no sweaters over button-ups and wildly patterned ties.

Sleep took Will quietly as his mind ran off with hopeful dreams.

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Will was in the kitchen frying some eggs when Beau wandered in yawning and scratching his head. Beau plopped in the chair, which protested with a loud creak, and mumbled a tired “morning,” to Will. Will liked his dad in the mornings, Beau’s usual stress lines and aging appeared throughout the day due to his laboring, but in these lazy Saturday mornings he looked younger and less grey. Will pushing two slices of Wonderbread into the toaster and moved to grab some butter and jam after sliding the eggs onto two plates.

Once everything was slathered in butter and sprinkled with pepper, they sat quietly munching on breakfast. Will swallowed a particularly dry section of his toast and decided now was as best as any other to ask what his dad was doing with his day.

“Are you gonna sleep today away?” To this Beau kept his head down staring at his eggs and then took a swig of his coffee before responding.

“Nah, I’m gonna go with a few buddies to the fishing port and grab a drink.”

So, Beau was going to be out late, and away from the house. Will was relieved, he did not want to bring up his afternoon to evening plans with the nephew of his dad's boss. He felt a minor pang of guilt, he did not like sneaking about and lying to his dad but today was a big deal. A chance to be a normal teen and maybe make a memory he can guard and look back on when they inevitably leave everything… again.

Beau finally looked up at Will, "what are you gonna do while I'm gone?"

Will shrugged, "probably read and play with Scrappy. It's been a long week, I'm tired." Beau was already nodding his head to this, never denying Will's more introverted behaviors. He also stopped nagging at Will to leave any and all local strays alone. Will suspected this was due to guilt over their nomadic lifestyle and dogs warmed up faster to Will than kids his own age.

"Alright, just lock up the doors and don't let nobody in," like Will would let anyone into this confining and rickety place he was supposed to call home.

The rest of the morning continued this way, with Beau pulling out the driveway and turning down the street to go be a gossipy sailor with his other washed out working pals. Will decided to get some food and water ready for Scrappy in case he appeared while Will was gone and sat the bowls out on the front porch. Then he needed to shower due to the passing glance at his grimy and worn expression in a mirror.

Will let the water stay cold, ice prickling and needling his back muscles as he frowned at poorly done shower tile. The needling sensation and cold neck reminded him of that confrontation in the hall, and something dawned on him then. That Hannibal would have watched Will be cornered and jeered at; and did nothing. Will could not tell if he was irked by this or if it even mattered. If Hannibal pitied Will or thought him weak for even a second, Will would not have let Hannibal as close or be his friend. He was not some fragile thing in need of protection. However, it was a little unnerving knowing that Hannibal would let emotional or physical harm come to Will.

Was the fight with Matt truly just opportunity taken, and Hannibal would have let Will get pummeled? Of course, he would have, Will was useful right now and Hannibal seems to have enjoyed his company… but for how long?

Old insecurities and doubt burrowed their way out of the box Will shoved them in, and they hooked claws into Will's mind. They were frightened of Hannibal's apathetic nature but put the blame of it on Will's weakness. That because Will was too small, scrawny, a mere target perfect for the abuse of others it was no wonder he had to have some kind of use for someone as strong as Hannibal to even tolerate him.

Will did not realize he was clenching on his arms so much; he had ended up leaning heavily on the tile and shivering vigorously under the painful spray. Removing his hands from sore arms, ignoring the angry red nail marks, and stepping out of the shower Will could say with confidence that he loathed his inner thoughts. How well they distorted him and flocked to others, anxious for Will to be someone else over being himself.

He turned off the water and toweled himself down trying to piece back the peaceful morning he was having prior to letting his insecurities take over. Will came to terms with the simple idea that if Hannibal did not want to be around Will, then he would not have remained by Will's side. He decided it was better to trust this part of Hannibal than continue to concern over his lack of emotional caring.

Will went into his room and distracted his mind by going through thoughtless routines; putting on lightweight clothes, tying his shoes, attempting to tame the mess that grows on his head, brush his teeth, and assemble his tackle box. This all did not necessarily make him feel happy, but he was no longer under assault from his own abusive thoughts.
A rolling spool caught his attention and Will hurriedly grabbed the braided fishing wire that tried to escape him. It was an expensive gift from his dad, but he wanted Will to have something nice and sturdy for his pole. It seemed lame at the time, but now Will had a few years of fishing under his belt to appreciate such a gift. He did his best to keep the wires knot-free and stored securely.

The kitchen clock buzzed out at the time and Will decided better to head over to Hannibal's now. He did not know which wealthy obnoxious home would be Hannibal's, but he'd figure it out eventually.
And without further pause, Will had a toolbox in one hand and a pole in the other as he strolled out the door locking it behind him.

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The brick was just as immaculate as when it was laid down so many decades ago, and due to being a historical neighborhood of the posh upper class it was constantly maintained. All lawns were separated by either whimsical hedges or old knee-high iron gates with spirals and points. Even the songbirds seemed sing a little louder and prouder here, putting their poorer brethren to shame.
And to say Will felt out-of-place would be the understatement of the year. He was a dirty smudge on this rather spotless and prestigious old money neighborhood, and even the gardeners outside knew this. Servants and maids had an air to them as well, and Will was happy everyone chose to ignore him than ask why he was even here.

Will turned down another hedged corner and spotted a rather tall dark brick wall with a gilded gate, upon the gate's face was a large font 'L' and Will decided to try it. The gates were open and the brick from the street traveled up the round-about driveway. Will had a shiver go down his spine ogling the enormous manor, because he knew Hannibal had money but… this was insane! Will swore under his breath before finally arriving at the front steps, before a very large set of heavy polished wooden doors. He used the gilded knocker, something resembling a gargoyle's lower jaw as the handle on either door, and let it fall heavily against the door.

Less than a minute one of the doors were being pulled open and Will was face-to-face with a beautiful girl. She had to be somewhat close to his age, and had the darkest eyes he'd ever seen, with shining raven hair to match. Will's face heated and eye contact was instantly impossible.

“How may I help you?” Her soft accented voice, something Asian but Will didn’t know where, asked him.

And like an idiot Will kept stuttering, “u-uh um, does ah H-Hannibal Lecter live here, er, am I at the w-wrong house?” God, he was just going to go bury himself in their curb trash, which were in gilded cans as well. Seriously obnoxious.

The strange and very beautiful girl nodded, “Yes, he lives here. I shall retrieve him, please wait in the foyer.” She had stepped back and waited for Will to fidget himself in before shutting the door and quickly disappearing down a side hall. The foyer was a massive, squared room, and had this cold nobody-actually-lives-here-it’s-a-museum vibe. Will did not step off the deep green carpet, but then began to panic whether the polished marble floor or the carpet would be more expensive to replace and started doing a weird interpretation of square-dancing until footsteps alerted Will. He swallowed and decided the rug shall be sacrificed to deal with his commoner nastiness when a giant of an older man came strolling in through the left arched doorway. He had a cigar loosely hanging out the side of his mouth and a newspaper in massive hands, which were adorned with equally massive rings.

Will must have made a nervous sound, because the giant man flicked his hawkish eyes over the paper and at Will. His face was set in a natural scowl which only deepened in inspection of Will’s appearance, but what was the most alarming was the look of recognition in the man’s eyes.

He took a long draw of smoke before breathing out and spoke in a thunderous baritone, “you’re Beau Graham’s boy, aren’t you?”

Will was gulping now, he wanted to bolt so badly. The man radiated power and anger, anger at Will’s mere presence and existence in his expensive foyer on his priceless rug and-Will was panicking. He must have just been floundering in place because the man huffed angrily, “what? Do you speak? Are you mute?” His voice was growing harsher which only made Will’s vocal cords and throat bob uselessly. Will wanted to melt into the carpet or just turn around and leave, but shit! The man already knew who his dad was, why can’t he just speak?!

The aggressive man took a step forward, angling his body towards Will’s, and was about to spit more venom at Will when an “ahem,” drew both their attention to the right archway. Hannibal stood there with the girl behind, both statue like and watching the one-sided exchange. Will decided to latch onto Hannibal’s expression, his control and calm… but there wasn’t calm this time?

Hannibal’s eyes were live flames, sparks of hunger and such raw anger it actually left Will’s heart racing and his own fury was trying to emerge and snarl. It was so startling to see Hannibal so emotional, of course his face hadn’t changed from the usual polite apathetic mask, but there was tension in his jaw and damning seriousness in the brow. Hannibal was calculating, and when Will finally took some of Hannibal’s control to dare a look at the older man, what he saw there was fear.

What the hell was happening?!

Like time never stopped and threatening stares never exchanged, Hannibal gracefully stalked over to Will's side and placed a hand on his shoulder, holding him in place. He knew that Will was about to flee. Hannibal let those frightening eyes turn to Will and even more bafflement took over, honestly giving the poor teen whiplash. Why was Hannibal looking at Will like that?! Like he was to be protected, undeserving of anger and that he was being coveted. It made his throat dry up.

"Will, please allow me to introduce you to Chiyoh," he physically steered Will's body away from the seething man behind them and gestured to the girl. She bowed and didn't offer a smile, which Will actually appreciated considering the explosive expressions currently happening.

"And my uncle, Robert Lecter." Hannibal's voice did not stray but, god, if looks could kill there would have been a massacre. Will suddenly knew why Robert was fearful.

After such a brief introduction, Robert did not wait for any small talk and just continued to eye them both before turning around and retreating out the foyer which allowed Will to finally release the breath he had been holding. Hannibal nodded towards Chiyoh, who tilted her head in acknowledgement before leaving as well.

Will could not stand another minute in the wretched and freezing manor, so he grabbed Hannibal's sleeve and tugged the cranky beast out the front door and into the sun where the walls weren't caving in. Will did not stop tugging them far away from the damn manor until they were well past the brick wall fencing and down a block. He stopped and let out another large exhale and turned to Hannibal, who seemed to calm down back to his usual blank slate. Hannibal was amused by something and kept crinkling his eyes watching Will try to come down from his adrenaline rush, "Christ, what was the about?!"

Hannibal hummed and kept watching, "my uncle is not the friendliest."

Will laughed, a little hysterically actually, "really? No shit? Ugh, how do you live in there?" Will then froze realizing how rude he was being, swearing and insulting Hannibal's home. He snuck a look at the
other teen and did not find any offense there.

"Yes, it is quite a hostile environment."

Will frowned and stood straighter, he felt he needed to do-or at least say something. Anything, from one look he knew Hannibal wasn't in a happy home.

"A-are you okay?... I mean, he's a lot."

Hannibal frowned at this, this is what seemed to insult the damn teen, "I am capable of taking care of my uncle's fits."

"No, I mean yeah, I could see that. The guy was terrified of you-why is a guy his size scared of you?"

To this the bastard gave the most not-innocent innocent shrug ever and Will was laughing again because the whole thing was crazy, and he was already worn out and ready to live the neighborhood.
“C’mon I’m sick of it here. Let’s go see the ocean.” This earned Will that crinkled amusement again, and right before he stepped off the curb, he realized he was still hanging onto Hannibal’s sleeve.

Burning heat lit his face and ears and he was scrambling to put distance between them. Hannibal said nothing, but Will could tell he was smug and god, that only made the heat worse.
Will peaked over his shoulder and was greeted with an actual smirk, and Will did not know whether to punch or … or-er, do something much more damning to their new friendship.

How was he going to survive the rest of the day knowing Hannibal could smirk like that?

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading and go check out my other work Let Them Eat Cake which is a two chapter one-shot of Baker!Will and our favorite cannibal getting a sweet tooth! Second chapter in the works and will be out soon!

As always,
stay schnazzy!

Are You With Me?

Chapter Summary

WARNING

-An animal is caught and released from a fishing line, this may disturb a reader, but I assure you it's done correctly and does not harm the written animal.
-Homophobic thoughts and insecurities/slurs
-Threats of implied rape/molestation
-Graphic violence

Please remember this time frame is set in the 80's in New Orleans, Louisiana. As this story proceeds we will see more blatant homophobic slurs and other slurs. I do not approve of any slurs, abuse, or etc that is used by these characters. It is all for realistic plotlines and darker themes.

I apologize for not posting on this story sooner, I have been busy packing for college and I was hit with writer's block pretty bad. Hopefully we get back on a more regular posting schedule! :)

Chapter Notes

I sorta kinda did a quick reread through for any spelling/ grammar mistakes and did not see any, if you see one please comment so I may edit the chapter and fix it. As always, I accept constructive criticism and I hope you enjoy this chapter. And if you're curious, google the flora and fauna I added, especially the hepatica nobilis (very pretty).

The songs that heavily inspired this chapter were:
Beautiful Creatures by Illenium Feat. MAX
Favorite Record by Fall Out Boy
Lonely Boy by The Black Keys
And the song sung by the band is Rescue Me by Fontella Bass

Please enjoy reading,
stay schnazzy!

They were crossing the rail-line and busy sidewalks, the smell of bustling city life, coffee, and earthy river becoming stronger. A street band was playing away with an impressive trumpet leading the songs. Will snuck glances at Hannibal observing the band with a pleased

expression gracing his features. Will had picked up that the strange teen enjoyed music, but it only seemed to be instrumentals or classical music. Anything with lyrics received some philosophical murdering and nitpicking and so Will decided to never share his own rock bands with the pretentious teen again in fear Hannibal will ruin AC/DC.

Instead of continuing through the tourist streets and wider avenues, they went down the side-allies that connected all major roadways in the lower city. New Orleans was a vibrant city with French architecture and bustling activity even away from the tourist spots. Locals were hanging laundry, watering flower boxes, and simply living in these tight spaces and it was interesting to watch. Will and Hannibal ran their fingers against rough yellowing walls and enjoyed the cool breeze that twirled through the maze of buildings on this sweltering day.

Suddenly they were busted through and back out on the main roadway connecting to supporting boardwalk. Splitting off the boardwalk were piers and wooden stairs down to the riverfront, an impossibly wide freshwater river that curved through the city and allowed trading boats and fisherman passage. Already sweat was lining Will's brow and all he wanted to do was sprint and jump into the water. In this tourist area it was much cleaner and clearer than by the less wealthy spots in the city, and there were servicemen already sending out nets to pick up litter. Hannibal wasn't watching the water like Will but instead at the crowds of people moving about. He and Will were not a part of the tidal wave of people, but rather silent observers hidden by the boardwalk's historical brick homes and the sweet bay magnolias.

Will let his eyes flutter off from the water's rolling surface to sneak glances back at Hannibal, the teen looked more mature here in the shadows. He still stood tall and well-groomed but, in these moments, when no one was looking or interacting with Hannibal he appeared more honest. His face would relax and Will could actually see the emotions flickering and kept deep underneath Hannibal's golden skin.

The older boy turned his crimson stare over to the younger and something silent was exchanged between the both of them, here under white petals and dazzling sky, something soft and warm. It made Will want to move and expel the energy welling up underneath his fingertips, but instead he said, "want to look around?"

Hannibal nodded and stepped out, out and away from their little moment and Will was left to piece himself back together before joining him. They weaved through loud young adults, nagging retirees, and crying toddlers and Will laughed at Hannibal's silent pinched expression. Will spotted a clean and empty bench and tugged for Hannibal to follow him there, where they claimed the spot. Will plopped his
fishing gear on any extra space as Hannibal eyed his behavior, "what?" Will challenged.

"Listen, I don't want anyone else taking this spot, here you sit and be creepy while I go get us something from the vendors."

If Hannibal was offended by being called creepy he did not show it, but did sit where Will pointed. He frowned at the younger teen, "what are you getting?"

"It's a surprise," Will flashed a smile and added, "it's not greasy, don't worry."

Will jogged off before Hannibal could protest and made his way to a Sno-Ball vendor. It was basically shaved ice with a syrup and something Will could afford to treat them both with. He would have felt bad if he could not have offered something to his friend. Will waited a few minutes in line before ordering two dishes of the cold dessert. He then dug out the crumbled dollar bills and change, paying, and grabbing two spoons before heading back to the bench. Will watched Hannibal sitting perfectly poised with a leg crossed over his knees with that same blank look, and actually saw an older man get creeped out by the teen. Will was trying his damnest not to laugh, but it was this standoffish atmosphere around Hannibal that he enjoyed. It resonated with his own.

“Here you go! I got you blood orange,” Hannibal’s hand cupped around the dish and accepted it giving Will a quiet thank you. “Have you ever had a Sno-Ball before?”

“No, I believe this is my first,” and with that, Hannibal used the plastic spoon to dig into the soft shaved ice and scoop a small mouthful. His brows scrunched ever so slightly and Will watched his lips try not to pucker.

“Too tart?”

“No… I expected you to get me something sugary, this is actually pleasant.” And yet he still wore a gently concerned stare at the cold dessert in his hands, completely gob smacked that he actually liked it. Will started on his own and tilted it to show Hannibal, “hah, mine is kiwi. It’s sweeter than the orange.”

Hannibal took another bite and closed his eyes to taste the syrup, and Will had the totally uncalled for and outrageous want to run his fingers through Hannibal’s hair. The other was vulnerable almost, softer edges with his eyes shut and doing something so ‘normal.’ There wasn’t any gel in his mousy blonde locks, and bangs fell lightly over the brow. Will wanted to push it back and watch it fall down over Hannibal’s forehead again.

Instead, he busied both his hands with finishing his kiwi flavored ice. Still standing by Hannibal, fidgeting back and forth in place.

“What plans do you have for us, Will?”

“huh?” blasted right out of his confuddled mind, Will flailed for a hot second before registering why they were there, “oh! Yeah, I wanna um, maybe fish and walk the bank? You can find some neat stuff down there, that is, if you want to?”

Hannibal smiled up at Will, a faint thing that crinkled his serious eyes, and that heat flared across Will’s neck and ears. The older teen was nodding, “I’d like that. Will you teach me?” There was something teasing in his tone, probably from seeing Will’s reactions.

“s-sure,” he frowned and pouted at himself, embarrassed by how Hannibal stirred him up. They remained at the bench, quietly eating and Hannibal offering to throw their dishes away as Will set up his fishing pole. He ran the line through prongs and tied off his simple hook. Will did not expect to catch anything, but it was relaxing all the same. The docks allowed fishing off this part for the tourists and kept this area supplied with fish. Will moved behind the bench to the railing and pulled out the tackle box to find something to bait his hook with.

“What about the red one?”

Will jumped and whipped around seeing Hannibal standing so close, not hearing the teen’s silent steps. “Sheesh! Hannibal you scared me!”

A sly smirk twitched on his lips before leaning closer to Will. Flustered, Will was trying to rub away the crimson burning on his face and Hannibal followed the movement of his hand.

“I apologize, will you choose the red bait?”

Will blinked then looked down at the tackle box. The red bait was made of cardinal feathers, beads, and bright red string. It was a pretty knot and was one of the bigger ones Will had made from hand.

“You like it?”

“I do,” Hannibal hummed his answer, “did you make these?”

“I did…” Will felt closed in by the bench, railing, and now Hannibal pressing closer but still not touching him. It wasn’t bad or stirred his claustrophobia and that made everything all the more confusing.

“You have an eye for detail, Will.”

Will shifted on his feet and strummed his fingers along the wooden rail, feeling the splinters and grains under his blunt nails and skin. He could absolutely NOT look at the pretentious bastard and his subtle flirting which, was actually working?! Will gulped and shoved the pole towards Hannibal, graceful fingers accepting without being unprepared from the movement, and Will fully turned his back to pull the yellow bait from the others. Hannibal did not comment on the change nor did Will explain why.

How could he explain that now he had an emotional attachment to the red bait?

Hannibal traced his fingers around the pole, testing its weight and balance, placing his strong hands around the grip and looking natural as ever. Will finished tying the yellow feathery bait around the hook, concealing it, and cleared his throat. His stormy eyes skittered across Hannibal’s chin, throat, and shoulders, but never those eyes that bored into him now.

“Don’t draw back far, just a simple flick and let the line pull before reeling in a few loops…”

The older teen somehow made sense of Will’s muttering and did as instruct, landing the hook yards away into the river. He slowly reeled in, and Will could make out the yellow gliding on the surface and reflecting off the blazing sun. Hannibal settled the hook a few yards or so from the bank, where reeds and tall grasses housed many of the frogs and fishes.

Will knew he should offer some kind of praise but couldn’t trust his voice or even his words, so instead chose to lean over the rail and cross his elbows. Peering out into the water as small white and grey boats lazily drifted by. Hannibal did not speak either, he continued a casual grip on the pole and found a comfortable position against the railing as well, not too casual

though. They remained in this quiet with the breeze brushing through loose hair and the chattering blur of people behind them, yet… they were so alone in this bubble.

Minutes or even an hour could have passed, and Will did not know. He only fell back into the present once the line started to pull and give away to something caught on the line struggling. Hannibal was the first to react, and remained calm in reeling in the prey. Will watched the tendons and veins in Hannibal's forearms and hands cranking back the handle. It wasn't strenuous but there was something exciting about it.

Will leaned over the rail squinting down at the water, whatever Hannibal had caught was racing through the reeds and appeared very round. Then PLOP! They both comically leaned steeper, eyes wide at what could be on the end of the line, and this spiked and prehistoric looking turtle emerged, wrestling and hissing like all hell broke loose. Hannibal went counterclockwise, lowering the turtle back into the murky water where it paddled above the surface chewing on the yellow feathers. Will couldn't help laughing, "of course you snag an alligator snapping turtle!"

Hannibal still had wide surprised eyes on the angry beast below, "it's…"

"It's kinda ugly."

"Don't insult my catch," Hannibal was trying to hide the grin on his face, but it only spurred Will to laugh harder, "c'mon it's pretty tangled lets cut it loose."

There were wooden planks that creaked and winded down at a sharp steep to their far left, Hannibal continued to unwind and give the line more length, so they did not pull against the creature when walking down. Will had grabbed the tackle box and pulled his clippers out, not wanting to leave any of their things unsupervised above. Will stopped Hannibal before the silt bank, "take off your shoes, they'll get ruined from the sand and mud."

Hannibal's face scrunched up in distaste as he handed Will the pole and crouched down to pull off his pristine leather loafers. Will giggled and paused, once again confronted with Hannibal's soft hair that swirled atop his head. Will could peer closer and see that the roots were darker than the ends which faded into a soft blonde, almost white in certain spots. He gulped and waited for Hannibal to finish before handing back the pole and taking off his own scuffed sneakers. They dropped them at the bottom step and walked the few feet to the crowded reeds and grasses where the turtle had found a rock to climb upon. It couldn't have been much bigger than a dinner plate, but it looked something fierce with its spiky armor.

Will pulled his clippers forward and crouched, slowly waddling toward the back of the turtle where a long tail whipped back and forth. It reminded him of the angry cats that Scrappy tormented.
Hannibal had begun to reel back in the line, shortening it so the turtle couldn't escape or increase any damage done, he leaned on his haunches wearily eyeing the creature. The turtle turned its dinosaur head at Hannibal, both sharing some kind of intense stand off when it hissed.

"Quite feisty…" Hannibal murmured to himself, keeping a certain distance from the thing that had started to snap once again. "Don't let em near your toes!" Will teased, and continued

to creep closer, cool river water flooding around his feet.

The hook was not in the turtle's throat, just caught on the upper beak, yellow feathers and plastic beads still in one piece and not lodged inside either. Will could see where he'd need to grasp and cut out to free the turtle, but that snapping beak was a problem. Hannibal looked to Will, not nervous but anticipating it seemed, but he eyed Will's hands. The younger teen followed the gaze and realized he was shaking.

"Shall I cut?"

"You need that stick…"

Hannibal looked to his right spotting what Will was eyeing and grasped the washed-up branch.

Will didn't argue and tossed the clippers over the snapping turtle and into Hannibal's quick hand. Much steadier than his. "Okay, I'll grab the tail, have it bite down on that branch and cut the eye of the hook." Hannibal nodded and counted down slowly from three to one. On one, they went sprang into action.

Will's hand clenched around the spiny tail, its rugged texture pressing into his palm, and he held the poor creature up, Hannibal had darted forward to offer the branch as a loud CRACK echoed off, and in one fell swoop pinched off the protruding hook. The metal bit freed itself and fell somewhere onto the rock. A blur of hissing and yellow, Will and Hannibal turned and plopped the turtle into the water a distance away. He was not graceful stomping back onto the bank and out of murky river water, Will had a feeling the ferocious creature would seek revenge on his exposed feet and ankles.

Hannibal was back on the bank with him and sighing. Will leaned back against the boardwalk poles, their width wider than Will's small frame, and looked up at his companion. "Congrats, you have successfully caught and released a snapping turtle back into the river." A teasing tone and Hannibal peered down at him, light sweat on his exposed collar bones, "we have given the creature time to plot our demise."

Will laughed, realizing Hannibal must have had the same ideas about the cranky beast, now paddling away no longer hissing. "Do you think you would ever fish again?"

"Perhaps not, but I do see the appeal."

Will slid down the pole and sat down in the sand, digging his toes in and feeling the grainy texture. Hannibal remained standing, now looming, but he was leaning too and looking out across the river. The boats obscured the other side, blotting out everything except the tops of roofs and old buildings. One roof was a patio of sorts with some kind of cookout in commencement. Will couldn't hear them, and the sound of those above them wasn't as loud as before.

"Did you know I lived on those fishing boats for a while…"

"No. What was it like?"

Will did not know why he decided to share that piece of his past, of his history of being poor and one of the same hardworking sailors that disappeared, out away from the mainland and out of everyone's mind.

"Safe, no bullies or patronizing…"

"You felt safer in the unpredictable throws of water and waves rather on land amongst people?"

"People are easier to read, but that's what makes everything worse."

Hannibal hummed; he was now watching the younger teen. Will wondered if Hannibal was critiquing his wild curls and untamed hair. Probably noticing dandruff or grease, something gross. Will knew he was gross…

"They try to hide it, or not at all, but nothing stops them from isolating."

"You prefer to be alone Will, but you do not wish to be forced into isolation."

Will peeked up, finding those cool amber pools digging into his mind. They weren't intrusive, Will thought they should have been, but they simply ran a gentle hand among Will's thoughts and walked through the fields. Never trampling or even leaving a footprint, just listening.

"Are you isolated?"

Hannibal's face didn't change, nothing even twitched, but everything changed with his next words, "I'm not. I have you."

Will did not know how to respond, so he just scooted closer almost against Hannibal's long legs and squeezed around his knees. Resting his chin upon his arms and not diving back into amber pools. A warm hand carded through his hair, scratching his scalp and petting, Will still could not speak. It was everything. Everything was changing, and for once he was not drowning in it.

He could process and think his own thoughts, could accept that for once there was another presence beside him that would not leave. Beau, the hardworking man, was there. But he didn't listen or try to, probably fearful of Will's mind, but he offered this quiet sort of love. Something that would not satisfy but did not disturb.

Hannibal offered a friend who listened and could say the things that Will could not.

The sun had lowered, still bright outside but now the sky held an orange hue with the blues and dusty yellows. Hannibal kept his hand petting through Will's curls like that for an hour before they both moved in unison. They picked up their shoes, which had rested on the bottom step undisturbed. Scuffed and torn sneakers next to expensive loafers something that could be a story in itself, and they glanced over the differences because they did not matter.

Will and Hannibal slipped them on after brushing off loose sand and continued to walk down the boardwalk, exploring further their scenery. A low voice called and pulled them down a

pathway where a group sang and played. Their instruments weren't any better off than Will's shoes, but it was such lively music. The lady singing had rich dark skin, a tight green dress sweeping to her boot clad feet, and curling hair pinned with a silver magnolia. She smiled and dazzled the crowd, even Hannibal was tilting his head to the soulful sound.

Lights and bulbs were hanging between the roof and rafters, blanketing the sky in a warm glow. A few couples were watching like the teens and others danced together, laughing into the evening. Will did not feel exposed, no one paid them any mind as they enjoyed the singer's lovely voice. Hannibal leaned close to Will, his breath brushing against the young teen's ear as he spoke, "do you dance?" there was a smile in his deep voice.

Will blushed something awful and shook his head, trying not to squirm, "n-no?"

"Shall I teach you?"

"W-what? No, I mean---"

"Please, let me return the favor."

Hannibal's hands found Will's and he pulled Will further back from the crowd and onto the far side. He turned Will from prying eyes and faced the frazzled teen. "Hannibal I'm not sure…"

"You may watch my feet if that helps?"

Will bit his bottom lip, worrying it between his teeth, and used the excuse to not look anywhere near the other's surely smug face. Hannibal was slow in his movement, first he swayed them, keeping Will close, and soon they were moving about. The steps were not complicated, Will just had to follow the leader, but they were very playful. Will felt them spin together and pull, felt the breeze on his neck and the clamminess of his hands on Hannibal's dry ones. His thumb grazed Hannibal's wrist, feeling the steady heartbeat, they danced to that rhythm.

The music never let up, and eventually Will's mouth was stretching and dimpling, and he found himself smiling down at their feet. Hannibal was humming, he must have known the French song the woman sung, and Will was shivering from it. He was a livewire in this moment, so close to falling but Hannibal kept him moving on his feet and connected to the world.

"Will."

He looked up at that aristocratic face for someone so young and serious, and saw what Hannibal was looking at. They found their way into a hidden courtyard. It was adjoined by the live music alleyway and continued to be lined with warm bulbs, but what was more profound was the branching Live Oak they were under. Its branches stretched and curved knowing no bounds and consumed the courtyard in a gigantic display. Hanging off its limbs were weeping Spanish Moss, that reflected silver in the light. Will felt small underneath it all.

They had stopped moving, standing still hand-in-hand. Hannibal was watching him now; his face was undecipherable.

Will looked at their hands, slowly unclasping and drawing away. He did not know what to do with them now, he wanted to fiddle and shove them into his pockets. Will wanted to say something, anything, this silence was too much for once.

“T-thanks for putting up with my two left feet,” he grumbled and shifted on said clumsy feet.

Hannibal’s eyes only seemed brighter, “thank you for allowing me, you’re an excellent dance partner.”

Will frowned, embarrassed but trying to play it off and failing, “sure…”

Hannibal stepped away, giving Will breathing space, and turned to look more closely at their surroundings. The music had died down from this distance and the sky was growing darker.

Will’s mind was rampaging from what just occurred between them, what has been happening all day, and it was making everything spin. Hannibal’s presence not being a bother was weird and the way Will reacting to everything was even weirder. It was how friends felt right? That fluttering in the stomach, the urge to comb through the other’s hair, and the dancing--- no way in hell that was normal. None of it could be, was Hannibal grossed out by it?

No- no Hannibal would not go out of his way to do anything he did not like, and they were honest friends now, had to be, or this was all too much. Will did not know if he would survive anything more, and Hannibal was impossible to read. His blank and detached expression was at odds with his subtle words and strong actions, they all sent mixed signals to Will’s flustered mind.

He did not deserve that kind of warm attention from someone else, and well… wasn’t it wrong to want that attention from another guy? Would it just keep adding on to the bullying? Will was so deep in his thoughts that he almost missed Hannibal’s question.

“What?”

“Would you care to join me for a charity event next month?”

They stood further apart now, but Will’s skin was still searing. He tried processing the question, god he really did, but it wasn’t registering. “Yes?”

Hannibal nodded and started walking back toward the alleyway before pausing and staring at Will expectantly. “Will? Are you here with me?”

“Yes.” The younger teen hurried over, stopping a few feet from Hannibal. They walked through, lights still shining but the music group were all sitting at wire framed tables eating and talking. Hannibal picked up the pole and tacklebox, and Will was mentally kicking himself for forgetting it. He could never afford another one, and his dad would have yelled at him for being so careless.

They emerged back onto the boardwalk and the night crowd was filling in, mostly younger people and troublemakers. Will looked back in time to see one particular troublemaker pickpocket a passing woman, snatching her wallet and keys from an open purse. If Will was braver, he might have said something, but he did not want to bother.

Hannibal did not seem to care either, he watched the scene unfold without an inkling of emotion before turning away and heading to a vendor. Will lingered on the thief, watching the guy turn down a side street to torment some other naive soul. He walked over by Hannibal in the small line and saw that they were serving shrimp and rice covered in a curry sauce.

“You’ll eat this?”

“It’s fresh,” Hannibal did not give back the pole or tacklebox despite Will’s casual grab for it, “she used the good ingredients.” And when they were before the older woman operating the stand, Will understood what Hannibal meant. She was cooking while serving right there, cleaning the shrimp, and mixing puffy rice in. Then a large iron bowl was bubbling with an ochre-colored sauce, it smelled spicy and had Will’s mouthwatering. Hannibal ordered them two bowls and paid for the meal, which Will tried objecting to but was denied, and they wound a public sitting area to eat at. Will’s mouth was hot and he felt the heat travel all the way to his stomach. It perfectly reflected the summer evening and Hannibal seemed content with the meal as well.

“Have you ever made curry?”

Hannibal swallowed before answering, “no, but now I am tempted to. She was excellent at blending her spices.”

Will nodded, licking sauce and rice off his lips, “when you make it, can I taste it?”

This brought another amused smile to grace Hannibal’s playful lips, “of course. We have to refine your heathen palate, stay away from jumbo dogs and cheesy fries.”

Will laughed, “oh, I’m a heathen again?”

“You were always a heathen, and an absolute rascal.”

“Now I feel like a stray dog,” Will knew he had a few mutts named Rascal before.

Hannibal did not comment, but there was a predatory look to his eyes that Will could not quite decipher, or better yet, chose not to. They continued their dinner, Will asking about other meals that Hannibal had or could make, getting himself excited over all the possible dishes he might get to taste test. The older teen’s eyes never left Will, and ever the gentleman, discarded their bowls for the other.

Will was about to suggest more Sno-Balls went a loud explosion whistled behind, blue coated and reflected among the faces of people and buildings. He turned around and cranked his neck back to look at the sky above the water. Fireworks were going off in a dazzling display,

a treat he had no idea he'd witness tonight. Hannibal quietly joined him at their table, watching the show.

Reds, greens, and golds were dancing. Some much louder than others and Will winced at the ones that would leave a ringing in his ears. Hannibal did not seem like a fan of those either. Will found his favorite in the show and leaned across the table to tell Hannibal over the sounds of cannons and blasts.

"I like the gold ones that look like waterfalls," Will cupped his hand and tried not to shout into Hannibal's ear, "which ones do you like?"

Hannibal pursed his lips, making the decision an important one and surely pouring too much thought into it. That made Will smile a little.

"The vibrant blues are quite beautiful," his voice was somber despite his answers and Will could not help but pry, "why?"

"They remind me of the wildflowers of my home, Hepatica nobilis."

Will watched the fireworks in the reflection of Hannibal's eyes, thought he saw something watery and sad. It was jarring, and all Will wanted to do was lean closer and see if he could understand where this sadness and nostalgia came from. Why it left the stone mask cracking just a little.

The older teen chanced looking at Will and sighed, "your eyes as well." His voice was soft, and Will had to strain to hear, not believing what he heard. Will did not respond; he would possibly cry if he did. Hannibal's emotions were raw and so strong it left anything inside Will weeping from the onslaught. And just like that, they were closed off from prying light and vanquished into the dark.
Will sat back in his seat and looked back to the sky, watched everything reflect off the water and felt the sorrow quietly drain from his bones. It took its time lingering.

When the lightshow finally ended with a bolstering finale, Will was exhausted. Absolutely drained and ready to crawl into bed and sleep everything away. Hannibal stood and waited for Will to crawl off his seat and join him. Their movements were slow, Hannibal was just shortening his stride to stay by Will's side, it made everyone else flow fast by, just a blur of loud color. The smells, sounds, and lights were getting to be too much, and Will was thoroughly overstimulated by it all. He jumped and flinched at anyone brushing by and stuck closer to Hannibal's solid form.

Hannibal steered Will down a familiar side street and was quietly thankful the other bothered to pay attention to their surroundings, streetlamps were flickering on, and stores were shutting down their lights, exhausted from such a lively evening. Street performers packed up instruments and gathered in pubs. A quiet was finally floating over the city and Will could finally breathe again.

And that's when Will slammed into a wall.

Brick dug into his shoulders and spine, he felt his head hit the wall with almost a crack and numb sensation following after. Overall, not a good situation, which proceeded to get worse when he opened his eyes and catalogued what was currently happening. The thief from earlier had him with a forearm pressing on his windpipe and knife threatening his lower stomach. Nicotine-stained teeth breathed out and choked Will's senses making him gag, that foreign mouth sneered and spoke in raspy tones, "Scream, and I'll gut you."

Will did not have enough air in his lungs to scream, and was clawing at the arm pressing on his throat, when panicked eyes searched for his friend. Where the hell was Hannibal?!

"Nab from that rich boy," Will saw Hannibal a yard back, he had his shoulders lowered and blood on his forehead, but eyeing the other accomplice, much bigger than the thief. Hannibal and his opponent were about the same height, but the other outweighed Hannibal by 100 lbs.+ easily. Will squirmed and wriggled against the arm and tried kicking out "Let go!---" "Easy, what did I say?" the knife pushed forward and through Will's shirt. He could feel the point pressing into his skin. He was terrified, so much was happening and there was so much he couldn't do. That gnarled face taunted him and Will's heart was stuttering. Hannibal can't be here.

"Hannibal, run!"

"He's not going nowhere, get em!"

Hannibal stood his ground and slowly lowered the pole and box he held by the open lid. Will could see his red bait and felt something possessive twist in his heart at the idea of it being stolen. To never have it again and know it was in the possession of these two criminals hurt him, wrenching his mind. Hannibal remained low and still watching the other man begin to edge towards him, he held no weapon probably believing his own strength enough against whoever they mugged, and surely would be enough against two skinny teenagers. Hannibal was not intimidated and leveled his eyes on his opponent.

A hand was rummaging in Will's pockets distracting and making him freeze from the intrusion: he was seething, "stop touching me," Will growled out and felt hot rage fill him. Will could not see past the man restraining him, but could have sworn from his peripherals spotted movement. That damn mouth laughed in his face and spit flew, making Will recoil more in disgust, "what? 'fraid imma get close?" something shifted then and Will's heart dropped to his stomach, "you do have pretty face for a dude," that knife did not seem as threatening compared to what the thief was insinuating. Will's blunt nails bit deeper into the arm, yet he was laughed at for his efforts, "you two are a bunch of pansies aren't you? Wouldn't mind if I got a taste---"

"STOP HELP---AHGKK!!!" a hoarse cry was choked off and a muffled crack alerting Will and the thief back down the ally. Hannibal was hunched over the bigger man who laid still on the ground, eyes open and glassy. Hannibal removed his hands from a broken neck, his chest was slowly heaving, regaining control. His head looked up locking eyes with Will's captor. Flames, that's all Will could see, flames licking and growing from the holes and cracks in that mask.

His friend wasn't human in that moment.

Will felt the knife dig deeper and could not prevent a groan from leaving his clenched teeth, Hannibal paused at this noise and began to stalk up towards the pair with a determined look. He knew what he was about to do, and that scared Will more.

“I’m warning you, stay back!” the thief’s bravado was faltering in confusion and kept glancing back at his still accomplice, “T-Travis wake up, dammit! What did you do to Travis?!” Hannibal’s fists were clenched, the veins in his forearms were bulging with how rigid he was. Will felt his panic ice over, no longer moving but watching the other teen, how he moved and the horrible expression on his face. His eyes were so dark, pupils were wide drowning everything in black and the shadows falling across his face made him sinister.

“Hannibal…” Will whispered with no true purpose, almost testing the name to see if it sounded human anymore. He could hear phantom scraping from claws and watched the sky become obscured with protruding antlers that sprouted from Hannibal’s head. His face was skeletal and gaunt, truly monstrous.

“Answer me!!!” the thief screamed at the approaching beast in rage, voice cracking once the realization that Travis would never wake up dawned upon his scrunched face. “I’ll kill you… I’ll kill you!” He lunged.

Will fell to his knees sucking in air to fill his lungs, a hand immediately going to the hole in his shirt where warm blood seeped. He watched in dismay as Hannibal was attacked knife arching down towards his chest, but what Will did not see in the fishing line in his friend's grip. It reflected from the street lights and promised a cruel and painful end.

Hannibal ducked down and tackled into the man’s chest, throwing him down hard against the pavement. The knife fell from the thief’s grasp and skittered in the dark. Hannibal knelt over the flailing man, taking punches, and kicking to his body, and wrapped the line around the man’s neck. Will saw the energy ripple from Hannibal’s chest, cross his biceps and forearms into iron fists as he puuuuulllleed. It happened in a second, but everything moved in slow motion. The thief's eyes were bulging and skin drained of color.

Will choked out a sound along with the thief whose neck was being cut into, severing through thin flesh and releasing a waterfall of dark crimson that flooded the ground. He gargled and choked scratching at his own throat trying to break the fishing line that kept growing tighter. Hannibal never stopped, he looked at the man with cool indifference, rewrapping the line tighter around fists to pull that knot. A gasping sound, it was raking through Will’s ears, left the choking man and a fountain of blood erupted as Hannibal continued to slice reaching thick arteries and veins. Will could see the cartilage exposed and smooth tissue ripping apart. The thief’s eyes rolled into the back of his head with blue lips agape and his fingers stopped scratching. He fell silent with only the sound of flowing blood left. Hannibal gave one last tug, Will flinched and grabbed his own neck at the violence of it, and stood up from the bleeding man.

He loomed over his victim, rolling his shoulders, and letting the line fall from his hands. Will could see where the fishing line cut into Hannibal’s palm with an angry red gash across, something superficial. Will was still on his knees looking up at his friend, he could not tell what his expression was twisted into. But it did not stop Hannibal from slowly walking over

and crouching before Will, it did not stop Hannibal from leaning close and running those murderous fingers through Will's hair, nor did it stop Hannibal from speaking.

"Will… are you with me?" his voice had not changed, was not any different. But everything changed now.

Will replied weakly, "yes."

Brother's Revenge

Chapter Notes

I live bitches, here's a long-overdue chapter. It is smaller than I usually do, but hey I'm trying.
Things are back on track, these past few months have been all-consuming and I apologize for leaving you all with that cruel cliffhanger. I suggest rereading the past chapter to catch up with events since it has been awhile.

Reminder, our boys are just that, boys. SO, like most teens they will overthink and contradict themselves. Yes, even Hannibal, he has to learn.

Please enjoy and here is the link to the ballad that Lady Murasaki references to, please give it a listen!
https://www.contemplator.com/child/revenge.html

Stay Schnazzy!

Will was still shaking.

They were sitting on Will's front porch just an hour after the incident.

Hannibal had to take his friend's hand and lead him across New Orleans to his humble home, quietly looking back at the younger teen who hadn't spoken a word since his feeble "yes." Hannibal was growing weary with every minute Will remained unresponsive, most likely compartmentalizing what had just happened. Processing what Hannibal had done.

And with that last realization, Hannibal felt something unsettle within himself. Will he need to silence his friend? It is not ideal, and he is already known for having the young teen attached to his hip. People would notice if Will disappeared, and they would ask him first... but Hannibal found he did not want to get rid of sweet William. The brat was his.

So that left coaxing something from Will, anything would be fine, Hannibal just needed to know what he was working with to groom Will back to his side. Will said he was with Hannibal, he cannot leave the Lithuanian orphan, he does not get the choice to. Should he try, well, he'd simply need persuaded to stay.

"H-Hannibal..."

Face neutral and controlled, the older teen paused his plotting to look down at Will. The boy was curled up, hiding the bottom half of his face in his arms wrapped tightly around bony knees. The curly mess of hair hiding the rest of him well, Hannibal went searching for those

doe eyes. He found them connecting to his. Will must be searching for something within him, Hannibal hoped it was not his humanity. Will would find nothing.

"Will."

"You killed them... right? I did not imagine that?"

"Yes," dammit why must he speak the truth? His mouth moved before his thoughts, meaning to originally lie to the fragile thing before him.

Will nodded and kept searching Hannibal's crimson stare, the younger one could see the blood soaking in the soil, the earth felt as if paused in rotation. He began to uncurl himself, reveal more. Hannibal's gaze never wavered, and both were completely lost in deciphering the other.

"That... that was not your first."

"..." Hannibal kept quiet. Will's face pinched in something close to irritation, "Hannibal, do not lie to me."

"No, no it was not my first," the older teen sighed, like Will had inconvenienced him in some way. It worked in irking Will.

"How are you calm? When was the first? W-what are we going to do?" the floodgates opened and Will was on the verge of tears, Hannibal's heart squeezed and the last question made him go still.

"We?"

Will huffed annoyed, "yes, WE." Will finally looked away to adjust and fidget on his spot. The wood creaked under him, "I-I was there too, and if you were to get caught I'd..." Hannibal's eyes widened. The brat actually wanted to share this, be a part of this? Will was worried but not of Hannibal potentially harming HIM, but rather harm coming to Hannibal. Separation from external forces, the sweet thing was closing up from the stress of Hannibal being taken away. The older teen only felt possessive claws dig further into his bones and lungs. This, this he could certainly work with, and keep what was his.

"Will, do not fret. We will not be discovered," Hannibal purred and scooted closer to the shaking teen. Will swallowed and frowned, "how do you know? You haven't answered my questions..." Will's bottom lip pouted and Hannibal felt the brief need to bite it, kiss that sour look away. It was an unnatural feeling, but after spending hours with the blue-eyed hidden beauty, Hannibal's infatuation only grew with every ray of sunshine that dusted Will. From toes curling in the sand, a quick tongue, and Will's reactions of the world around him, Hannibal watched and watched. Yes, his friend was truly a diamond in the rough, and needed someone. Someone who could be his compass to guide him; lead him back to Hannibal's arms where he will be safe.

"Because," a smugness twisted Hannibal's lips, "this is not my first, and you need only trust me. Will you trust me?"

The younger teen was nodding, "h-how do I stay calm like you?"

"Simple, my dear Will, they are not people. They never were." Hannibal's warm hand found its way into Will's curls and began stroking the silky hairs, finding Will more responsive if touched, "they are pigs. They did not deserve their lives, and will not be missed. Who will search for their butcher?"

Will absorbed this, licking his chapped lips as connections were made, "slaughtering pigs isn't a crime..." Hannibal nodded and rewarded Will with a squeeze to his nape and continued to pet, "exactly, trust in me and I will make sure no one ever misses the swine." Will sniffed and nodded, "just a couple of pigs..." his voice whispered into the night air.

"Will." Hannibal slowly stood and pulled Will up with him, "go inside. Shower and fall asleep, relax and know I am in control. You can let go."

Will hovered close to Hannibal, shoulder slumped and exhaustion finally breaking through the adrenaline and anxiety. Hannibal could actually smell Will's acidic fear slipped away under the currant of his natural scent. He breathed it in and sighed. "Go, and I will be back again in the morning."

Will rubbed his eyes and mumbled. He turned and padded towards the rickety screen door, and turned back to look at Hannibal, face oddly peaceful. Hannibal silently wished Will always had this calm look, wondering what his expression is in the early morning half-awake. "Yes?"

"Thank you for today." The soft words fluttered into Hannibal's chest. He had to go, Hannibal had to run or he'd end up never leaving this brat. "Goodnight, Will."

***

She was standing in his room, her tall and elegant silhouette blocking the beams from the moon. Lady Murasaki turned towards her nephew with a knowing glimmer in her eyes. It was predatory and she moved like smoke towards him, an unlady-like smile gracing delicate lips. Hannibal felt goosebumps rise from his flesh and remained standing in the threshold.

"You reek of death, dear nephew."

Hannibal remained silent as stone, watching her in turn. The tension thickened in the room, and Hannibal could feel his blood grow cold and heart still. Lady Murasaki glided towards his desk, opening the drawer and revealing his sketchbook. She idly flipped through the pages humming "Brother's Revenge" and began to rip page by page the sketches Hannibal had compiled of Will's face, eyes, and smile. Her voice so low and hollowing as she gathered the ripped pages, holding them to moonlight.

"Oh you poor creature," her voice teased as she followed every penciled line, every ink drop. "He does not know, surely a monster like you cannot love." She sighed like a content cat and produced a lighter before igniting the flame. It licked and caught onto the edges as she continued to hum, that damn lullaby.

"'What will you give your brother John?'
ll-e-o-lay and a lullay gay,
'What will you give your brother John?'
'A gallow's pin to hang him on!'
ll-e-o-lay and a lullay gay,"

Hannibal remained where he stood watching as the fire ate at Will's lovely face. Lady Murasaki let the pages fall into the steel bin and snuffed out her lighter's flame. Turning to Hannibal she stalked over, an icy nightmare who took pleasure in reminding Hannibal of what he was. What he couldn't have.

"My dearest nephew, you should know better than to be hopeful. To want for a companion." she brushed the bangs from his forehead and tilted her head, "you will always be alone, because that is the monsters. Do not forget, lest you gobble him up." She let out a delightful laugh and walked off into the halls singing the dreary ballad.

Hannibal was frozen, he could feel the emptiness within him twist and confirm her words, for they were not cruel. The truth could not be cruel, it exists to remind creatures born from blood and tears where they belonged in the world. And what he isn't allowed to have.

Hannibal finally moved, a marble statue coming to life and walking over to the glowing bin lit by the flames scorching what remained of Will. Hannibal watched the scene from above bathed in the pale moonlight.

He can't have Will... He shouldn't. He does not deserve Will. Will wouldn't want someone like him. Will was a lamb, he did not know his shepherd had a taste for lamb.

The embers died and Hannibal was left alone with his thoughts lashing out against his foolish heart.

What... what if Will was snatched away from him? Like his beloved Mischa?

A single tear welled and slipped from his eye, sliding down Hannibal's cheek and jaw, dripping down to echo in the bin. To stain the ash as Hannibal's person suit readjusted itself. New stitching and a reinforced mask. If Hannibal... if he cared about Will, he'd stay away. He'd distance himself from sweet William. Safer that way, Will could continue his days in the sun rather than be pulled into Hannibal's world of shadows and deception.

The teen stood like a soldier, such a serious expression for someone so young.

He made a decision.

"Cattibal"

Chapter Notes

So yeah, I Pet Semetaried this fic, so be prepared for it's hellish return to the world of the living.

Since I've been working on Odious Waters I decided to reread one of my neglected storylines and reinspired myself, went back to the old storyboard and cleaned it up into a better format and clearer storyline. This fic was and is still expected to be a fairly long one, because of the conflicts I have in mind, but I am hoping to move it along. For those who don't wanna go back and reread the past two chapters here is a brief summary: will and our fav cannibal went on their first besties hangout on the docks, everything is great and magical etc etc, punks try to rob em and Han has a murderous tantrum killing them both in front of Will, Will's mind checked out and allowed Han to kinda manipulate him, next chapter deals with Will processing and denial etc, and Han has conflicts/ ominous threats from dear auntie.

That being said, this chapter is mostly Will's self deprecating angsty thoughts, sass, poor Beau trying his best, and Hannibal being creepy and all-knowing as usual. Next chapter will pick up the pace, and I hope to keep this characters in a constant rollercoaster.

Please leave any comments and I accept constructive criticisms/thoughts!

Enjoy and as always, stay schnazzy!

PS no beta we die like all of Hannibal and Will's cannon victims, graphic yet tasteful.

When Will woke up, the world was still turning and the morning light still shining. He heard his dad in their small kitchen moving about, smelled greasy bacon on their dented pan.

Bacon. Pigs.

Hannibal’s soft voice filled his ears, Will’s eyes flitted and wavered as the horror came pulsing back. It left a throbbing headache in its wake. Will grunted and rolled over, burying his face in his pillow. Foot steps creaked in the short hall, Beau stood in the doorway peering down at his son.

“Willy, c’mon. Time to get up, I made breakfast.”

Will groaned in response and continued to lay limp. Beau sighed, Will felt the mattress sink to his left as his dad sat. A large warm hand rested on his small back, Beau attempting physical affection was uncommon and awkward but Will’s heart desperately needed it. Needed his dad to keep trying and bridge the disconnection between them. Will opened himself completely to the gentle pat on his back, it symbolizing so much in that small action.

“Willy?”

“I’m up,” Will grumbled and turned his head to peak up at his dad. It was weird looking at Beau Graham and knowing exactly what he’d look like come twenty years’ time. He was told his dad was handsome in a rough-around-the-edges kind of way. Will didn’t understand this. All he saw was how tired his dad was, tired and scared and sometimes numb. Beau Graham was a man of hard times and even harder heart break. Beau didn’t speak much of Will’s mom other than “you have her eyes,” always followed with pain.

Beau had a frown on his worn face, he kept his hand on Will’s back.

“Willy you look pale, are ya okay?”

Will nodded, “I stayed up late r-reading.” Another lie. Jesus, why was this becoming a habit?

Beau paused, but then seemed to accept the explanation. He stood up after a few joints popped in his knees and trudged back out into the hallway, “come eat, you’ll feel better.”

Will doubted that. He also wondered why his dad trusted him so much, enough to not question an obvious excuse. Will spent most nights awake reading or fending off nightmares. How come Will is the only one that can see? Maybe he was being too demanding, maybe Beau is too tired from being not just a single father but also being alone with raising a weirdo like Will.

Will rolled out of bed, sniffed, and discovered he had sweat through the night in his destructive dreams. God he was a mess. He shuffled into the kitchen, took one look at the bacon and felt his stomach churn, cursing at his overactive imagination and threatening to abandon ship via throat. Will decided on just toast today. This didn't bother Beau; he ate the bacon off of Will's plate through their silent breakfast. Beau began washing their dishes, Will took this as an opportunity to silently slip away and crawl back into his bed. Not fifteen minutes later Beau was back in his doorway frowning.

"Willy you're gonna sweat and stink up the bed, we only have enough detergent for one more load. Go shower, I ain't gonna have ya being nasty."

"I'm nasty?"

Beau sighed, "Willy don't be pickin' fights because you're in a funk."

"I'm funky?"

"Yeah. Go drag your nasty and funky ass in the shower. Then go outside." With that Beau walked off and Will wanted to groan, beat his pillow, and fully commence his rebellious phase. Start screaming things like, "you don't get me!" and maybe wear all black like the metalheads at his school. Then reality blew away his fantasies and reminded him of who he is. And where he was.

Will once again, rolled out and rummaged through his drawers until finding a pair of plain jeans and a lightweight green shirt with some underwear. His shower was cold, like always, and he caught a reflection of himself all distorted and pale in the grimy tile. Will scratched his head, and tried to think of what to do with himself. So much has happened, and yet he's still the same. Still the same weirdo who sees too much of everyone but can't actually be anything of himself.

Water sputtered and the pipe groaned. Soon only a dribble of water pitter pattered onto Will's still soapy curls.

“DAD”

Beau clunked over and opened the bathroom door, damn Will’s privacy. “What?”

“Shower’s messed up. There’s no water.”

“Shit, what day is it Willy?”

“Sunday.”

“The twentieth?”

“Yeah.”

“SHIT.” And with that, Will’s dad stomped off. Will could hear him tear through the living room mail pile, probably searching for that water bill he forgot to pay, or has been long overdue. Will rolled his eyes and grabbed a towel. He dried and soaked up the leftover shampoo as much as he could and got dressed. Will peaked around the corner of the hall, looking over Beau’s shoulder and eyeing the envelope with a big red stamp spelling out, “OVERDUE.”

Beau heard the boards creak and whipped his head over to Will, “don’t you mind this, go on outside.” His voice was gruff and not inspiring much hope or promise in Will. He didn’t argue and open the screen door. Another hot sticky day greeted him, but at least with the leftover cold Will wasn’t completely miserable, well, not yet.

What could Hannibal be up to? Probably nestled in his palace sleeping like a baby and not haunted by last night. Probably waking up to a breakfast of caviar and something else pretentious that Will has read that rich people eat. Then he acknowledged his thoughts, spurring him to be spiteful at Hannibal and his abundancy of wealth and apathy. But that palace is pretty cold. And Hannibal doesn’t seem happy either.

Can Hannibal be happy?

Will thinks he could, but it would be something twisted.

With a sunny sky and endless hours awaiting Will, he decided to just wander. Wander and distract himself with the bustling life of New Orleans. This included kicking rocks across the sidewalks of middle-class families, white picket fences and all. Putt around the shopping districts and stare at glass window displays, eyeball the newest comics and boardgames. Immediately feel dejected because Will doubted Hannibal would play D&D. Walk past butchers and cafes cooking lunch, feeling his stomach growl. Will felt oddly similar to Scrappy, and then found himself on a mission to befriend the local stray dogs. They were more difficult to approach without treats on hand. But he did pet a cat, usually not his favorite of animals, but the kitty was a pale sandy color with a set of orangish-brown eyes. Its aloof behavior and overall "I'm better than you" attitude was endearing and reminded Will of a certain someone.

Speaking of, Will was crouched down terrorizing the prissy cat with his affection when a pair of expensive leather loafers appeared in his peripheral. Will glanced up through his curls and found Hannibal looking down at him with that same politely disinterested look.

"Hello Will."

"Hi," Will felt his mouth fill with cotton. He was awkward and now his neck hurt from looking up at the older boy. He turned his attention back to the stray.

"Hannibal meet Cattibal." The older boy's fair brows ticked and a gentle confused look graced his features. Will was too embarrassed to look up.

"Cattibal?"

"Yeah."

“That’s a terrible name.”

Will whipped his head up and found Hannibal concerned, probably worried if Will was concussed and now a blubbering idiot. He wasn’t concussed but he was definitely an idiot without help. “What do you mean, it’s a great name.”

“How?”

“Because,” shit, now I have to explain how Hannibal and this cat have the same personality, “uh, cause he l-looks like you.”

“The cat looks like me…” Will was now panicking.

“Uh yeah, and-and you have the same eyes.” Cattibal apparently was fed up with Will’s affection and swatted at his hand, leaving two thin scratches on the back of his hand. Will cursed under his breath as the stray scampered off. He stood from sore haunches and mumbled, “he’s mean like you too.”

This humored Hannibal, the teen was giving Will one of his more genuine smiles. It was faint, but Will could see that Hannibal was entertained by this.

Will felt his face heat up and quickly changed the subject, “why are you here?” It came out more aggressive than intended.

Hannibal caught his mask, and adjusted it back snuggly on. Stitching the person suite, damn if something escapes and is exposed.

“I was looking for lunch… care to join me?”

Will wanted to say no, and act like he was busy and had something else very important to do. Something to demonstrate independence from Hannibal and his odd world, but that would all be a lie. Will was waiting for Hannibal, and found that his life has become a waiting game for Hannibal's attention. "Y-yeah," he sheepishly answered.

Hannibal spun on his heel and strode out of the ally and into the light, Will on unsteady feet followed.

They found themselves at a fancy seafood side café, serving all sorts of fresh catches with pompous names for such small portions. Will struggled with the menu until Hannibal eventually ordered for the both of them. "I assume you haven't any allergies?" Will shook his head and Hannibal ordered something fancy with shellfish.

"How are you feeling?"

"What?" Will had been distracted by their surroundings, lodged deep within his pile of thoughts.

"You look unwell." Hannibal's tone alluded that he knew why, he just wanted to hear Will's excuse or thoughts. Will felt himself at a crossroads.

"I always look unwell." This was apparently not the answer Hannibal wanted, those elegant brows scrunched again. The only indication he was displeased, but Will noticed all the same.

"Will," he leaned back, "you know what I am worried about."

"… you're worried?" dammnit, Will wasn't helping his independent image.

"Of course, you're my friend and last night was… very stressful."

"That's an understatement." Will scoffed.

Hannibal didn't flinch nor respond to his sass, creating this silent and oppressing atmosphere. Will began to squirm under his steely look. He caved in.

"Yeah I've been… stressed to say the least."

Hannibal nodded and took a delicate sip of his water. Will could envision an expensive wine in its place. Now he was imagining Hannibal turning water into wine and then came to the conclusion he wouldn't even be surprised, probably would not even flinch if Hannibal revealed he was part of a cult, or even the leader. What would the followers have to wear? Something gaudy and expensive. Not a lot of followers then---

"---Will are you listening?"

"No… I'm sorry."

"Will, I am worried your already active mind will utilize escapism and you'll drift further from reality. From me." Now that hurt, and Will didn't want Hannibal feeling that way.

"No, no I'm here. I promise I'll try to be."

"You promise?"

"Yes."

Their intense staring was broken by the waiter delivery their lunch. Will broke eye contact to assess the meal, but Hannibal's gaze never wavered or strayed. He was still picking Will apart. He could see Will.

This realization had the younger teen feeling all warm and confused, this… this attachment and dependency on the older teen was entering into odious waters. Into unexplored territory and deeper than any passing polite acquaintanceship Will has had. Sometimes, he forgot he's only known Hannibal for a little under a month. That the other teen wasn't always there to see Will and understand him. Better than his own dad it seems.

"This looks delicious, thank you."

Will peeked over at Hannibal, who politely waited for Will to take the first bite. That cold façade was once again opening a small, barely-there window for Will to look into and see how fond Hannibal was of him.

Will was addicted to this.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

All mistakes are mine/ no beta reader

Please let me know what you think/ I accept all constructive criticisms

Please Enjoy!

The days lazily floated by, boring and mundane. Well, that wasn't completely true. Will was quite the entertainment, his paranoia made him easier to frighten like a terrified rabbit. Hannibal stopped announcing his presence with heavy footsteps in hallways and rooms, he no longer cleared his throat or fiddled with buttons. He wrapped himself up in silence and backgrounds, enjoying the way Will would jump when he finally discovered Hannibal near.

Then something wonderful happened; Will stopped flinching. Hannibal would magically appear by his side, and Will wouldn't hesitate to include the older teen in whatever the peculiar brat was thinking of. The way his mind ran endless laps exhausting itself all to just end in tragedy, and it was this continuous observation that explained why Hannibal was so… fond of Will.

Will was a tragedy, something to burn itself and destruct the like the brightest star.

A week had rolled by the murders didn't even grace the radio or television. Will's shoulders began to lower and the fear in his eyes faded. Hannibal was still making the scrawny boy meals and immensely enjoying Will's ravenous appreciation, but something new needs to come bursting through the door. Some kind of excitement needed to shake their lives and create opportunity. Hannibal could see the internal struggle within Will, the teen seemed to hesitate in accepting anything other than sharing lunches.

Hannibal had tried to persuade Will to fancy dinners and evening activities, but Will would panic, blubber out a pitiful excuse, and scamper away with his tail tucked between his legs. How could Hannibal draw out more of Will? Make him stronger? He would need to break him first and rebuild what's left.

As Hannibal sat at his desk musing the many different expressions of Will, Chiyoh gently knocked upon his bedroom door. He called her in, and with an unspoken look between them, he knew his uncle was seeking him. Hannibal closed his journal and placed it neatly within the desk. Locking the compartment and slipping the key into his breast pocket. Chiyoh had left, wandering the halls of the manor like a ghost.

Hannibal strolled through the dark halls, full of garnished metals, antiques, and crafted wood. He disliked it all, the wealth was faux and cheap to him, no taste at all aside from how Hannibal designed his room. When he arrived at the study, Hannibal was greeted with three older gentlemen sitting upon the gathered leather chairs. The room was filled with Cuban cigar smoke, clouding the air and making everything hazy. Hannibal scrunched his nose to this.

The gentlemen cackled and laughed something throaty, speaking with thick Southern accents about their dealings. Uncle Robert stood tall by the paned windows, opening one and lazily walking over to give a companion a hardy slap on the shoulder.

“Now! Come on gentlemen! Business isn’t dead yet, still a profit to be turned.”

“Or burned,” a rather pudgy man snorted, reminding Hannibal of hogs. In fact, based upon the sheer brands of wealth on the stranger, Hannibal discerned him as the famous pork and pig livestock trader. He believed his last name to be Verger.

“How are the warehouses dear Robert?” they continued to gossip despite Hannibal’s obvious presence in the doorway. Terribly rude.

“The commercial warehouses currently have a pest issue,” Robert paused, his dark eyes flickering over to Hannibal. “I have an exterminator booked for the Friday after my dear wife’s charity ball.”

Verger adjusted his massive body in the squeaky leather chair, ash and burnt ends from his cigar dropped to the Persian rug, sizzling in the fibers. He crudely stomped his foot, smothering and smearing more ash into the rug. Robert didn’t seem to care, no one did. Hannibal’s mind couldn’t stop racing with thoughts of brutality, the different intricate and

artful ways he would mutilate the pigs in the room. At such a young age Hannibal was brimming with potential.

“Is this scrawny chap your ward, Robert?” A smug look on Verger’s face, the wrinkles on his forehead double with the waggle of his brows. “He looks to be about Mason’s age.”

“Perhaps you bring him along the next visit?”

“No no, my Mason is a hardworking boy but he doesn’t play nice with others.” Verger’s soulless eyes did not hide the way he eyed Hannibal. The teen, if he had an ounce of normalcy within him, should have been quaking. Feeling like a trapped mouse in the room full of predators. Hannibal, however, was twisted inside and out. Nothing scared him anymore. He already lived through the unthinkable.

His mind, usually a fortress, a palace all his own under his command, betrayed him. Hannibal’s mind swiftly painted Will, smaller than Hannibal and underfed. Will’s sweet curls and big eyes standing in the room instead of himself before these hogs. The image of Verger eyeing Will the same way made something buried deep in Hannibal recoil and scream. He could feel it, it trashed the great hall, broke the palace stairs, and tore the furniture. It threatened the confines it willingly stitched together, growing more feral the more Hannibal envisioned Will battered and preyed upon by anyone… anyone else but himself.

Only he could control Will and properly nurture him. Free him.

“Why is he looking at me like that?” Verger sniffed and glared down at the teen.

Robert had his full attention on Hannibal’s hands, sweat beaded down his greasy forehead. The thing inside him had successfully poked out, and now Hannibal felt his facial muscles twitch. He’s losing control, and his face aches with unused expression. Hannibal couldn’t see what he looked like, only that it silenced the room.

He spoke, “You called for me uncle?”

Robert swallowed, straightened himself trying to conceal his fear, “yes, ahem, please think about which tailor will be assigned for this year’s suit.”

Hannibal nodded, turned on his heel and left the room.

He could still hear the whispers gathering now that he was gone. Hannibal, of course, didn’t care about this. But what happened back there could not happen again. He needed control, he needed composure. It was the only way to survive, and the invasive thoughts of a certain brat won’t reduce him to a feral creature.

Clearly Robert wished to speak of something else but decided against it. Perhaps with Robert’s cowardice Hannibal can utilize the excuse. He asked Will to be his plus one, and in the moment Will easily agreed. Yet, as they draw closer to the event Hannibal knows Will. The brat will make an excuse and flake, letting his extreme introverted fears take over instead of joining Hannibal at his side. And in truth, a truth Hannibal will never speak aloud, he wanted Will there, so he won’t be alone once again at the event. This was always Robert and Lady Murasaki’s opportunity to present Hannibal as an eligible bachelor to other wealthy families.

He did not want to tolerate it this year, and quite frankly, Hannibal wanted an excuse to dress Will up. The teen believed Will could be quite handsome if given the chance, and nothing would irk his guardians more than if “the help” was on equal standing with their ward.

Hannibal returned to his bedroom, undressing for bed and musing on how he’ll convince Will to join him for a suit fitting. Hannibal might lure him via food. Or ask Will to help him fish again, the younger teen likes to be needed. Disguise it as an emergency?

However, Hannibal drags Will into the shop, it will be something to look forward to.

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“Huh?”

“Will, please, your mouth is agape.”

Will frowned and dramatically shut his mouth, clicking his teeth and wincing at his own antics. Hannibal refrained from smirking.

“I have an errand to run downtown, and I’d like your company… if you’re able?”

Will fumbled with his backpack straps, looking intently at his shoestrings. One was fairly loose; Hannibal predicted the younger teen tripping over his feet soon. Will nodded, seeming confused by his own agreeance. So, he isn’t completely avoiding Hannibal, at least not enough to refuse him so openly.

“Are we walking?”

Hannibal cocked his head, wishing Will would look at his face.

“We don’t have to, but I know you prefer it.” Then Will doesn’t have to offer gas money, money he doesn’t have, the thoughts Hannibal needn’t speak aloud. Will nodded again to this.

The two of them stood together in the bustling linoleum hallway and yellow flickering lights. It drained the color from Will’s usually tan and warm complexion. Will belonged under the sun, Hannibal noticed the teen was happier when they were outside. Will was still fiddling and nervously looking about. Hannibal realized Will had yet to look at him the whole break period, not even facing him. It was irritating.

“Will.”

“What?” he snapped and crossed his arms defensively.

“Why are you upset?”

Will continued to fold into himself, protective and ignoring Hannibal's question.

Hannibal knew how to get a response. And with his best remorseful tone, allowing his brows to upturn slightly, "… have I made you upset? Are you annoyed by me?"

This caused Will to flinch and jump into Hannibal's space. Fear of abandonment and worry for Hannibal etched and carved into Will's gentle features. It soothed Hannibal seeing Will like this. The idea of Hannibal leaving made the younger teen teeming with desperation, and better, guilt for making Hannibal "feel dejected." Of course, he didn't, rather he was the annoyed one. Will should never blatantly lie and ignore Hannibal.

Will frantically squirmed under Hannibal's "sad" gaze, "n-no no no no, that's not it!" He finally dropped his backpack strap, the fabric worn from Will's fingers, and bit his lip. Hannibal could see the words stuck in Will's throat, "It it's just that, uh, I'm worried about h-how we get downtown." Hannibal paused and assessed Will more intently.

The younger teen was sweaty and too stressed. It can't be from the idea of travel? And never this reactive to being alone with himself? Was there something or someone else at play?

"Will, don't lie to me." His voice stern, Will flinch again.

"I ran into a senior group t-this morning. And, uh, they kept asking me questions… about you." His face was now heating up, returning with color, which temporarily eased Hannibal. However, there was more to this.

"Do you think they will try to speak with me after school on our walk?" Hannibal probed.

Will looked distressed at the idea, "I don't think they wanna speak a-and…" He frantically looked around and grabbed Hannibal's wrist. Soon Will was fast paced, just short of running, through the hall toward the boy's bathroom. Hannibal kept pace easily with his longer legs but found himself completely distracted by Will's hand. Where their skin touched, there was

such warmth. And Will's palm was rough, calloused and hardy, unlike Hannibal's soft hands. In his head, he quietly named the bones and muscles in Will's surprisingly strong hand.

Will didn't stop once they entered the bathroom. It was completely empty, surprisingly, but Will dragged Hannibal to the furthest stall and crammed them both inside, locking the stall door. Will was still gripping Hannibal's wrist, feeling his calm pulse. The young teen paused to listen then turned fully to Hannibal, actually looking at him with his ocean eyes. Hannibal tried to find pleasure in the attention he rightfully deserved but a public school's bathroom is disgusting. So many horrible chemical smells that did little to actually sanitize the surfaces.

What helped, was his little companion. Will, who always smelled of earth and spices, was a sufficient buffer. Hannibal used their height difference and the cramped space to lean closer to Will's fluffy curls. Will stiffened up immediately.

"What was so secretive we had to flee to a bathroom stall?" He didn't bother to hide his teasing tone, which seemed to settle Will more.

"Because I can't just open my big mouth and talk about what happened last time!"

Hannibal was a bit too distracted by Will's warm presence, just short of purring like a cat. If he closed his eyes, he could forget they were in the school's bathroom. "Last time?"

"You know, w-when you… you…"

Oh. That. So, Will didn't fear Hannibal being hustled by a bunch of seniors. He feared for them.

"When I killed them."

Will's head sharply looked up, nose almost brushing Hannibal's chin. Will's eyes were impossibly big, so much blue it was mesmerizing. Sometimes he thought the teen could be

compared to woodland and river nymphs from Greek myths. Hannibal's calm demeanor must have irked the younger teen.

"This is serious, don't make fun of me."

"You think me reckless enough to kill fellow students?"

"No, I think you never back down from a fight and I can't guarantee no witnesses."

Hannibal didn't expect this answer. Will was looking straight back, his empathy and mind tearing apart Hannibal's skull and peering in, seeing what's inside. He was wrong, Will was still looking out for him. He didn't want Hannibal caught. A cold smile crept across his lips, dark fondness dusting red eyes.

Hannibal was too curious, too enamored in the moment.

"Am I a monster to you?"

"Yes." Oh, Will was angry, how delightful and intriguing. So angry and frustrated with Hannibal, yet still holding his wrist.

"But if I'm caught, you would no longer be tied to me."

Will glared, "you're enjoying this too much."

"You would miss me? Or do you want to see me kill again?"

Will's face was dusted with peach, "I miss when you didn't speak," he rolled his eyes growing embarrassed.

“Will you always surprise me.”

The younger teen seemed to be deeply affected by this, and this time, his stormy eyes locked onto Hannibal’s mouth. “I’m not trying to,” he muttered softly.

“Nonetheless.” Hannibal squinted, his ears listening for anyone who might stroll into the restroom. “Do you wish to see me kill again?”

Will frowned, eyes still watching Hannibal’s mouth, “why do you have to say it that way?”

“In what way do my words displease you?”

Will twitched in place, his thumb subconsciously rubbing circles atop Hannibal’s wrist. He seemed to be wrestling something in his head. “I don’t know. It’s wrong, I know it’s wrong.” Those clever eyes flicked briefly back up to Hannibal’s. “You do not care whether it’s justified or not.”

“Not true, I do care.”

Will let out a sarcastic laugh, “don’t fool me.”

“Truly, dear Will, I care the reason why I kill. But that reason is our crossroads. You can justify what happened this weekend, but our reasons may differ.”

Will’s face grimaced and furrowed, more conflicted than before, “I have a feeling your reason is petty.” This made Hannibal grin again, baring his sharp teeth. “I am petty?”

“Very.”

The bell rang outside in the hall, disrupting the growing intimacy between the teens, despite their words. Will huffed, frustrated, and went to reach for the stall handle.

“I’m not finished with this conversation. When school ends, I’ll meet you by the gates.”

And with that he began to pull away, letting go of Hannibal’s wrist and rushing out of the bathroom leaving Hannibal standing alone. The older teen peered down at his wrist, expecting to see scorch marks from Will’s warmth. From his touch. He was disappointed to not find anything indicating Will left a mark. It was just beneath the skin.

Hannibal left the stall and looked up, coming face-to-face with his reflection. Despite all the calm confidence and control in the world, he knew he was frightening. It usually felt powerful. But right now, in this moment alone, he could’ve done without looking. Will was leaving so many marks within Hannibal, and it was frustrating that he still looked the same. Features too sharp and eyes too cold for a youth. Something inside him rumbled under the surface, clashed teeth, and claw to remind him his place. And to remind him of Will’s.

Never has he felt so conflicted about another, about where they stood in Hannibal’s life.

Will never let go, even when Hannibal was honest.

He dusted imaginary flint and dirt off his button up and tidied up his bangs. They had fallen while he was looking down at Will.

With a sigh, the only indication he was troubled, Hannibal walked out of the restroom and back into the bustling world of high school.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

WARNING!!!
Homophobic and ableist slurs, explicit language, panic attack depiction, and overall violence.
Severe bullying and self-hatred depicted.

*** Be aware of the language and violence in this chapter, some of this may be triggering for readers please proceed with caution***

As always, all grammar mistakes are mine/ no beta reader. This chapter is fairly long and is just, a LOT. It is to hopefully make up for my absence, right when I was starting this chapter I was struck down by COVID and now I have crawled from my swamp to deliver this... mess to your devices.
Bone apple my teeth.

I appreciate reading your comments and constructive criticisms, feel free to leave more.

Please enjoy (IDK if you will, it's kinda a lot)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“He’s a loose cannon, damn psycho,” Will muttered under his breath as he half-ran-half-walked to his next class. And look at that, it was PE.

Will skated around the corner and made it into the locker rooms. His brain was scrambling, which wasn’t anything new, but it was all about Hannibal. The snobby asshole was not fazed nor disturbed by their discussion, exactly how Will suspected he would be. Yet, Will still felt conflicted and unprepared for how apathetic Hannibal was to murder! C’mon! Killing, ending the life of another! The guy felt nothing… no that’s not right… Hannibal did feel something, but it was only because Will was giving him attention.

If Will were pestering Hannibal about his absurdly expensive fashion choices the older teen would had still preened. And why was he preening? What is the reason? The reason that Hannibal neglected to explain to Will, which meant the bastard probably wanted Will to figure out all on his own. Not fair. What was he? A dog for Hannibal’s tricks or an audience

to practice the art of dramatics on. Will's mind was so crowded, it didn't need to solve Hannibal's oddities and probably petty reasoning as to why he kills.

And then there was *that,* Hannibal has killed before. Enough that he is not an amateur, his heart probably never skipped a beat. Does he ever experience fear or adrenaline?

A harsh shove to the shoulder had Will stumbling out of his thought bubble and reeling into reality. Reality being a stale smelling locker room full of sweaty teen boys all shouting and running around. God, why was PE part of his high school education? How was dodgeball and basketball going to get him academic honors? A diploma? Contribute to his career? Will was just teeming with miserable questions today.

"Nerd, fuckin' watch where you're goin'."

Another shove and Will ran into the side bathroom, to cram himself once again into a stinky stall and try to get his thoughts together.

Will shimmied out of his jeans and t-shirt to throw on the customary gym clothes they all had to suffer in. Did Hannibal wear this?

Will could not help but let out a small laugh at the idea, Hannibal in basketball shorts and an oversized cheap shirt, one with the school's mascot plastered on the front. Nah, the pretentious bastard would openly commit mass homicide than wear cheap public school gym clothes. Will waited until the locker room quieted before sneaking back out and locating his locker. He shoved his bag and clothes inside.

Will made it into the gymnasium just as the class bell rang, soon followed by the coach's whistle. It pierced his ears and made his skin crawl, all his fellow classmates quieting down. The coach, a middle-aged man perhaps the most non-descript adult alive, barked at the teens to line up and get ready to do laps.

This wasn't terrible, actually. Will was good at running.

He’s been running his whole life.

In country sides, on side roads, and cracked sidewalks. Will has pounded down pavement to flee from bullies and enemies alike. His problems could never be louder than the blood pulsing through his brain, his lungs screaming as muscles burned. Will loved to run.

While everyone else moaned and started jogging, Will wasted no time to sprint forth and start sweating, letting the exercise take over his dumb dumb dumb brain. Minutes turned into thirty, and it took another sharp whistle for Will to break out of his stupor. The coach was calling all the miserable teens back to do some other heart-pumping activities like jump rope or jumping jacks. Will slowed down and walked on shaky legs to the coach, asking if he could continue.

“Uh, sure I don’t care. Have you ever considered track or cross country?”

Will shook his head, “no…” shit, this is awkward uh, “thanks though.” Outstanding, another stellar interaction. And just like that he was running.

When the period ended, Will took his time going back to the locker rooms. Lunch was next, and he could afford eating into that time. Hannibal will be annoyed though; he always was upset when Will came late to their shared lunches. Well, he’ll get over it, Will knew he was covered in sweat and probably stank.

He pushed open the heavy door and made his way to his locker. Something felt off. The lock was on the floor. Will remembered closing it when he went to the gym.

Will’s stomach flipped, rolled, and never settled.

His anxiety flared as he slowly opened the small metal door, the creak echoing in the empty tiled room. Will had to bite his tongue at the sight.

FAG. GAY. LITTLE BITCH. FAGGOT. SPAZZ. RETARD.

It didn't end, all in sharp black, crude and disgusting. It's like the marker was etching into his skin, like these damn words actually pierced below the surface and seared him. Will did not realize he was borderline hyper ventilating. They, whoever they were, had taken his clothes and shoes. His backpack was still intact, save for more crude scribbles and vulgarities. But now Will was without clothes.

He had a sneaking suspicion and slowly made his way to the small bathroom. Unfortunately, his mind was correct. Jeans, sneakers, and shirt all floating in the cramped oval of the toilet. God, he can't even fish them out, what if the jerks pissed on it? He took a step closer to peer in, and indeed the yellow hue of water was not a good sign. Will was clenching his fists so hard, nails bit into skin stinging his hand. It could not hold back his trembling.

What does he do? He's not allowed to wear his stinky, sweaty, nasty gym uniform for the rest of the day, let alone take it home.

The beginning of lunch sounded off and panic shot through his heart. Every little problem, every little detail and sound floated and clogged his ears. Muscles in his body straining to keep control, to keep from snapping from the straining. Why today? Those seniors had already haggled him this morning, pulling on his hair and tripping his feet. Yeah, they deflated his dignity, but Will was tough. He could handle it and move on, buck up and be strong!

Will can usually do this, he didn't even feel this kind of pain when his life was being threatened in an ally! He has no other choice than to be strong, Pa can't know. His solution would be to move, and if they move then Will loses Hannibal, Hannibal who now means something to Will, who already is in jeopardy of being taken away because the bastard is a killer and- oh god what if Hannibal finds out? What will he do? Will he be upset? Upset that Will isn't strong enough…

The clock indicated that fifteen minutes had already passed. This caused more stress, Will was so late to lunch, Hannibal had to be furious. Will was stupid and weak and a burden.

Legs finally giving out, Will squirmed under the pipe and porcelain sinks. His back biting into the cement walls as he clutched himself closer. A whimper left his throat and Will

could’ve torn into his skin. How dare he be so helpless??? Such a target, like he was just begging to be bullied.

He continued to wheeze in the empty bathroom, time no longer noticed until the door swung open.

The strongest person Will knew strolled in, cold and solid like stone.

Hannibal surveyed the bathroom until he located Will. Will knew he had to look terrible. Covered in sweat, eyes, and face puffy red with lips trembling.

Hannibal froze, reptilian gaze soaking up every detail of Will’s haggard state. He took a step forward.

“DON’T!” Will shouted. Hannibal stopped, his face not revealing any hint of surprise, of emotion at Will’s outburst. It made the younger teen pissed. How come Hannibal didn’t cry, scream, or look as distraught and hideous as he?

“D-Don’t, just stay away.” Will’s eyes threatened to spill all his hurt and reveal his pain to Hannibal. “Please, I don’t n-need your help!”

No. Please stay.

Hannibal remained the same, silent and listening.

PLEASE STAY

Everything hurt.

“Y-you think I’m weak, a-a-and and helpless! IM NOT!” Will half-screamed the last part. Desperately trying to convince himself. His salty tears were transforming into red hot anger, searing his cheeks.

“IM NOT,” he choked, “im not, im not, im not!”

Will use the back of his hand to wipe away tears. Everything was still too much, too overstimulating. Why him? Why today, today could’ve been better!

“P-please,” his voice shook quietly, “please don’t pity me.”

Something fluttered across Hannibal’s face. Will watched rapt with morbid curiosity at the simmering rage on such a young face. And the most curious of all, pain. Will was causing pain somewhere somehow within Hannibal. The older teen took another step despite Will’s whines of protest and came to his knees. His brown slacks colliding with the grime on the floor. His long arms pulled Will from his hiding place, wrapping him up tenderly and close. Almost suffocatingly.

“Will,” he sounded like such an adult, someone aged beyond his true years.

“Will, listen to me.”

The younger teen shook his head, keeping his face stubbornly buried in Hannibal’s shoulder. His cheeks and nose rubbed against soft fibers, Will could breathe in Hannibal’s subtle cologne. Will didn’t want to show how much Hannibal affected him, brought him twisted peace despite cursing his name earlier. The comfort in Hannibal’s arms was sinful.

“Will, be brave for me. Look at me, my heart.”

Will peaked up. All he could see was blood. It ravaged and birthed flames, promising demise. But they also enveloped Will promising something else.

“You don’t believe them, do you?”

Oh god, he read it. This is not the first time, but Will felt like he was stronger compared to before. So much had already changed between them since then, but he was still so reliant on Hannibal. Nothing has really changed then… It left Will angry at himself.

“Will,” Hannibal sighed, “they are beneath you.” A firm hand began to comb through Will’s curls, bringing another comfort, another reminder of Hannibal’s strength and control. Will wanted to tear Hannibal’s hair out, wanted to rage and expel all the anger within him. He stayed still, stayed silent.

“Simply pigs, pigs that do not know their place.”

Will tugged on Hannibal’s collar, “don’t.” his voice croaked, eyeing the older teen in warning.

Hannibal met his glare without faltering, challenging Will while holding him.

They stayed like this for a while; unspoken threats and arguments filtering between the space of their eyes. Hannibal seemed to give in, if only for now. His thumb brushed a curl from Will’s brow. He hummed.

“Do you have any tests this afternoon?”

“… no.”

Without warning, the older teen stood up dragging Will to his feet while still holding him close. Will groaned, his legs sore from both running and locking up from stress. Hannibal paused for a moment, checking that Will was on his feet, before leading him out. Will's heart began picking up again, knowing he'll have to walk past that damn locker.

A cold hand gently blocked the view, another still holding onto Will's wrist. Much like Will did to him that morning. He was led out of the locker room and into the hallway, the hand blinding him falling away. Greenish fluorescent lights assaulted his sight, but he was soon being pulled to doubled doors. Hannibal was confident in his stride, Will lagged behind and could observe the other teen's broad shoulders and neck. Even his arms were fairly bulky, but Will had never seen Hannibal work out, nor allude to it. Damn, life just wasn't fair to Will.

Once they were out in the open, outside of the school and under the sun, numbness set in on Will's exhausted nerves. His brain doing its best to disassociate and let him hyper fixate on Hannibal's sandy hair as it came loose in the wind. The older teen guided him out of the school gates and onto the street sidewalk. There he pulled out a pager to ding the Lecter family driver.

Will had never used a pager before, never even seen Pa use one, let alone own one. Will bet Hannibal has used one of those fancy Motorola mobile phone.

Will didn't bother to ask questions or think as to why Hannibal was taking him out of school nor where they would go; instead, his headspace was drifting quietly.

The older teen was quiet and stoic, he too seemed lost in thought. His hand remained firmly attached to Will. They stood like that for a few minutes. Will's nerves were starting to finally calm in the stillness, but of course Will couldn't even have that.

"Hey, look it's that Lecter kid."

"Yo, moneybags!"

The hairs on Will's neck raised, and the anxiety was back swinging with full force. Hannibal never moved nor indicated that he heard them. Will knew better, the older teen was like one of those crocodiles on TV. Moving silently through the murky water, motionless and waiting for prey to get within arm's reach. Will tugged his hand, eyes glued to Hannibal's face looking for anything, something to indicate the fight he knew was coming.

The seniors from that morning strolled towards them, confidence in their gait. At least it was fewer than the original group, they were outnumbered by two. Though, all four were part of the school's athletic scene, if Will remembered correctly the short one was going to state for wrestling. Shit.

He tugged again, Hannibal held on and remained calm.

"Did ya hear me? I'm talking to you." The tallest sneered.

"Dude, he's holding hands with the spazz."

"Aaaaw, that's so cute! Maybe they're gay."

"They're definitely gay."

Will was shaking again, even with the warmth of the sun on his face and endless blue sky, even with Hannibal's hand clamped tightly around his wrist, he was losing control. And godammit he was tired.

Hannibal still didn't look, but Will whipped his head at the snarling bunch. They were about a meter away now. A little closer and Hannibal might snatch one up. But Will wasn't patient enough for that.

"Oh my god, douchebag! Does money really make ya deaf? We'll just have to help you with that." The tall one took another step closer.

Yeah, Will wasn't patient.

That morning, Will was too scared and nonconfrontational. He'd hit 'em in a heartbeat now.

Will's fist connected with the tall bastard's throat. And everything began to move in slow motion after that. The second Will's feet connected with sidewalk he was swinging again right in the giant's groin. When he looked elsewhere, Hannibal's eyes were the sides of saucers. But soon, he too was running towards them. Fist pulled back, whole body powering his arm as he swung over Will's head at one of the seniors.

Someone grabbed at Will's shirt, tearing at the collar, Will let the momentum carry his body as he swung leg, landing a solid kick in the stomach. He couldn't keep track, there were bodies and limbs and hands everywhere. Someone was yelling his name, he didn't care. Will was out for blood, he wanted these seniors to feel an ounce of the pain he went through every day, every day just to go to school. Will didn't notice his busted lip or the bruises on his skin.

The only thing that pushed time and reality back to the forefront of his mind was when Hannibal wrapped an arm around his waist, yanking Will away from the pile he was wrestling.

Will was heaving from the adrenaline, his blood was singing and he felt a semblance of control. He did something, he was not weak.

Hannibal had a big shiner on his left eye, the skin on his brow had even split, sluggishly bleeding. Will looked up at him and something alive in him laughed at Hannibal bleeding, proving that there was actually a heart underneath all that stone. Hannibal was not as amused and was gruffly saying something to the short senior. Will always knew Hannibal had a bit of an accent, but it was rougher and more pronounced now. The seniors seemed to be collecting themselves and their dignity. Will had been a hurricane within the 45 seconds of actual fighting.

The short jerk snarled something back, pointed at Will, said something and then Hannibal was on him. Will blinked and the two were wrestling in the grass, it stained and smeared dirt all over their clothes. The wrestler was trying to twist his body, lock Hannibal in some kind

of position but Hannibal would not have it. His hands jabbed between ribs, tore hair, and his teeth left a burning red mark on shortie's hand. He screamed when Hannibal latched on. The seniors and Will could only watch from the side, the two determining which side would win.

Hannibal clamped down on the wrestler's arm and death rolled onto the concrete sidewalk causing the arm to bend at an unnatural angle.

"Stop! You're gonna break it!"

"Spazz, do something! Lecter chill!"

Will watched. He didn't do anything to stop what was happening. Someone shook his shoulder, and another senior, the tall one, tried to help his friend but Hannibal let out an inhumane noise and everyone backed off. The Wrestler kicked Hannibal, faltering his balance and allowing for the captured arm to escape. Hannibal recovered quickly, dragging the senior onto his back. Hannibal straddled him trapping legs and arms, before gripping his head and bashing it onto the sidewalk.

The senior went limp immediately, and Will snapped to his senses. He yanked Hannibal off before he could do more irreversible damage.

A car horn honked.

Will kept grabbing and pulling and yanking Hannibal towards the black vehicle until he could stuff them both inside. From tinted windows he watched as the seniors dragged their unconscious comrade up and seemed to run-shuffle to a nearby truck. They were probably going to the hospital.

"Will."

His heart was threatening to break his ribcage, Will looked away from the window to his friend.

Hannibal looked undone and alight in rage. Will flinched, he couldn’t discern if it was directed at him or not. It could’ve been. It might be.

Hannibal took a deep breath, his shoulders sagging before he glimpsed toward the neutral driver. “Lecter manor.” His voice was hoarse.

“Yes sir.”

“Hannibal?”

“A warning next time, please.”

Chapter End Notes

LOL yup, anywhoooooo

If you liked this and haven't checked out my other works, Odious Waters contains pirates, mysteries, and all sorts of other Hannibal bullshit. I will be focusing a bit more on that one for the rest of this month!

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Sorry I went MIA

College, life, etc etc etc

I recommend rereading the last chapter. All editing mistakes are mine/ no beta reader. Please enjoy, and hopefully I will have more chapters coming out soon for ya'll.

Silence filled the backseat between the youths and the partition protected the driver from the tension. Music didn't even hum and the outside world became white noise. The only noise either boy could hear was the sound of the other's breaths.

Hannibal didn't bother to feel the bruising on his eye nor wipe the blood that had streamed down the side of his sharp cheek. It dried awhile ago, and Hannibal wanted to feel everything that was screaming in his body. His skin felt aflame with the rush of battle, it singed every vessel and motivated his bones. But Hannibal's mind… his mind was plotting silent and calm like the center of a storm.

That pig, the one who claimed himself a wrestler, a contender, had threatened Will's life. Will has had his fair share of bullies and harassment with or without Hannibal. But this felt different to him. Will was vulnerable, and the pig made serious threats, going as far as to name the street Will lived on. The image of Will limp and unresponsive shattered his control and suddenly he was hunting.

Will used the last of his strength to pull Hannibal off and shove him into the car. Hannibal considered throttling Will for daring to interrupt his kill, his homicidal rage, his JUSTICE. Then the most insecure of thoughts flitted across Hannibal's eyes and landed softly upon his lap. Light as a feather yet damning as hell. Hannibal in all his intimidation whether that be strength, oddities, or wealth still could not protect Will from being targeted, from being harassed and threatened. Sure the swine were scared of Hannibal, but they still viewed him like them. Vulnerable to the domestic things like adult authorities and bad grades, or perhaps his punishment will prevent him from joining a club or team. No, Hannibal does not fear these things, nor does he feel the consequences. This was foolish of swine to think, yet how effective could Hannibal be if they still thought it nonetheless.

Hannibal heard Will sniffle to his right. His eyes lazily swiveled that way without turning his head. Will was surprisingly in good condition, physically. Just some bruising, but no bleeding or split skin. His mental state had to be atrocious, though. Hannibal could see it all swarming like an angry hive, each wasp attacked Will. Never anyone else, Will always attacked himself when it was all over.

Hannibal hated him for it.

The last time Hannibal hated someone, was when Mischa died.

He watched Will sniffle and wipe his nose on the collar of his gym shirt. Will's curls had some grass and dirt, some dirt smudge his cheek. It gave him the façade of a woodland creature, perhaps an elf given how small the teen is. Hannibal still hated him, despite how cute he looked.

Despite how cute Will is, Hannibal still can't protect him.

Not even from stupid high schoolers. How could Hannibal ever hope to defend and grow a fellow monster like himself, especially when Will was his own worst enemy.

Hannibal *hated* him.

If Hannibal got rid of Will that feather of insecurity would surely disappear too. Hannibal would not need to question himself and his strength if Will was gone. Hannibal's fingers twitched by his sides, he felt his body eager to dispel the inner turmoil, all caused by this one tiny, insignificant brat.

Call it fate, destiny, or perhaps a cruel divine intervention.

Will turned his boyish face to Hannibal, eyes too big and all seeing. His chewed lips stayed in a sad line and his eyebrows never moved. Will's face conveyed nothing, but to Hannibal it was everything. Because when those eyes watched Hannibal, they accepted him. *Saw him.*

Will read Hannibal better than anyone dead or living, and they accepted all the anger Hannibal had within him. Will knew he was staring at his death, and Hannibal was waiting.

Waiting for tears, waiting for a flinch or twitch. Anything futile.

But Will continued to remain motionless and accepting.

Hannibal couldn't do it. He couldn't tear out his heart.

The car slowly came to a stop, and before them rested the old brick manor. Groomed lawn and sunny skies, it was a horrid scene. Like the rest of the world was mocking their pain.

Hannibal got out first, limbs moving through water as he made his way to the other side, opening the car door and offering his hand to Will. Will's hand was warm.

They walked inside, Hannibal lead Will immediately upstairs into dark halls and intimidating ancient portraits. The walls towered above, and old carpet runners scrunched underfoot. Around the corner and rushed to the door, darker than the rest, and the teens were in Hannibal's room. Hannibal walked in and went straight to his closet. Will did not take more than two steps in and stood still, hovering in the doorway. The realization of being in Hannibal's private space must have broke through his daydreams, because soon Will was exhibiting his usual fidgety behaviors. Nervously looking about, not sure what to do with his hands.

Hannibal rummaged through pressed clothes, all neatly lined and organized in a manner only Hannibal understood the proper etiquette to, and pulled a red cashmere sweater. Then, with one hand, pulled open his wardrobe drawer grabbing clean sweats and socks. Hannibal finally brought his attention to the uncomfortable brat and wordlessly guided him out of the room and back into the domineering hallways. Will was more alert and looked a little silly to

him. His cheeks were slightly puffed, as if his lips were barely containing a wave of questions. Hannibal let Will suffer in silent curiosity.

Not too far, and they were entering a rather large bathroom. The white square tiles and exposed piping offered a crisp and clean look, all rather industrial. Well, ignoring the obnoxious red wallpaper, but Hannibal quite liked the accent.

He swiftly set to starting the bathtub and arranging different cleansing concoctions. Hannibal could feel the weight of Will's brazen stare, in fact he would bet his best silk tie that Will's eyes were bigger than golf balls at this point. It made the corners of his mouth twitch, but aside from that his face remained passive. Will sniffled behind him. The tub was almost full.

Hannibal rolled up his sleeves and turned to Will.

Will's body freeze, anticipation as to what Hannibal was thinking all over his face.

"I prepared everything for you…"

Will stayed silent.

"Do you acquire assistance?"

Will's eyes flicked to the extensive amount of bottles, shampoos, and lotions sitting atop a gold stool by the porcelain tub. Panic filled that gaze. Then those lovely blue eyes swung back to Hannibal and a soft peachy blush spread across Will's face. Hannibal took note that the color was strongest in Will's ears, which peaked out from the erratic curls. Hannibal's teeth hurt looking at Will.

Will's face continued to flounder until he cleared his throat and spoke.

"I think I know how to bathe myself."

Hannibal remained quiet for a heartbeat, then spoke silently. “… do you wish to be alone?”

Now Will seemed to crumble a little. His ridiculous attire combined with watery eyes made Will appear infinitely younger. Hannibal felt a sadistic flower bloom in his gut seeing Will this way, it was strange. Usually, the younger teen made Hannibal a jumble of emotions spanning from anger to fondness, most often this bizarre protectiveness. Right now, Hannibal wanted to tease and torture Will, to maybe catch a glimpse of tears streaming down peach freckles and chin. Will could no longer look at Hannibal, which irked him but he’d allow it, and finally Will spoke.

“Not really… but it’s weird if you stay--- and you’re dirty too.”

Hannibal paused, he forgot that he was just as grimy and covered in sweat, perhaps more blood, as Will. But it didn’t matter. Will’s emotional strain and pain outweighed any physical injury on Hannibal. He needed assurance and care.

“Is it weird because of our age or is it me?” Of course Hannibal was going to pry a response from Will. Societal norms, as idiotic as they are, cannot build walls between them. Any mental barrier between Hannibal and Will shall be constructed by them, and them alone.

Will gulped, “n-no, well… i-it’s weird right? Guys don’t help each other bathe, that’s not normal…”

Hannibal tilted his head. “Does me taking care of you feel weird?”

Will chewed on his lip, eyes and nose scrunched in stress of Hannibal’s questions. Hannibal felt no pity nor remorse for this.

“Why do you need to care for me?”

“Because we’re friends. Friends care for each other.”

“Do friends b-bathe each other.”

“You needn’t care for me in this regard, but Will I am more alluding to your current mental state. You are teetering.”

Will kept his eyes firmly on the ground. “Are you saying I’m so d-damaged I can’t even fucking be alone in a bathtub?” Oh, he was angry. This is interesting.

“I do not think you could be alone in general, right now, Will.”

Will gritted his teeth and peeked up at Hannibal, assessing the older teen through sharp eyes. Hannibal felt odd when Will analyzed him, but it wasn’t entirely unpleasant. Right now, he wanted Will to give in, and depend on him. Be vulnerable and open. Tear down the wall.

Will looked back at the tub, steaming and heavenly. “What will you do?”

“Nothing, if that is what you want. I can turn my back to you, if you wish. I can massage your scalp and shoulders, release the stress that you have built from today.” Hannibal kept his voice low and soft, enticing Will to accept closure.

Will seemed to relent, “… you won’t do anything I don’t like?”

“Never.”

Will snorted at that, his youthful smile flickering in pessimism of that. Hannibal watched the dirt from Will’s shoes smudge on the pearly tile. He moved and turned off the faucet. Grabbing a towel, busying himself as Will’s last bit of stubbornness relented. Wonderful.

“D-don’t turn around.”

He could hear the rustling of clothes and sneakers being untied. Hannibal had poured some fragrant bubble mixture, which now consumed the top of the water like foam on coffee. Hannibal kept his back to Will, facing the closet in the bathroom. He stayed like this, listening to Will’s movements. Hearing the gentle splash of water lapping at the tub’s edges, the gentle sigh as Will relaxed in the water.

“Will.”

“Y-you can turn ‘round.”

Will’s back was to him, just the tops of his shoulders to his unruly head could be seen. As Hannibal moved closer, he could tell Will was hugging his knees. He pulled the stool from the vanity over, sitting in Will’s peripheral. With slow movements, he grabbed the shampoo. A moment passed between them, both eyeing each other. Hannibal waiting for permission and Will scared to give it. Eventually, Will’s answer came in the quick submersion of his head, slicking curls to his face and bobbing back up. Hannibal poured the soft smelling shampoo onto his palm. With gentle fingers, he began massaging the shampoo into Will’s hair, rubbing his scalp. With every movement, Will’s spine relaxed, causing him to fully lean back. Suds and bubbles fell upon Hannibal’s pants and the tile. It was silent aside.

Hannibal was sensing everything, he felt hyperaware of Will. Each sigh and the way his long lashes fluttered against his cheekbones. Hannibal let hair curl around his strong fingers, a tad mesmerized by how he could transform Will. A moment ago he was shaking and snapping like a scared dog, but now Will was lost in bliss provided by Hannibal. Controlled by Hannibal.

It was pleasant.

Hannibal continued methodically. Conditioners, curl amplifiers, and when it came to wash it all out, Hannibal felt a slight thrill. Slowly, he would guide Will’s shoulders down, the younger teen following suit and sinking under the water.

The bubbles cleared and underwater Will was a siren, a nymph, an image of silent peace. Hannibal wanted to keep Will under the surface, soft and free of tension. He wanted to drown Will in relaxation, have him submit to Hannibal's strength and control.

Another sadistic flower bloomed, the inside of Hannibal becoming a field of twisted orchids and lilies.

For how long could he hold Will, compliant and submissive, under the surface?

Would Will give in?

Could he relieve himself of his friend in such a lovely way?

Will's body twitched under Hannibal's hands.

Would Will put up a fight? Splash and thrash until the tub was empty but his lungs full?

Oh how curiosity clenched Hannibal's mind, and devious desire engulfed his heart.

One…

Two…

Three…

Will broke the surface with a gasp.

End Notes

Wow, that was some slow plot build! Unfortunately it will still be slow as I continue to build the scene and storyline, this is going to be a looooong fic. Stay patient and you will be rewarded with sweet moments between our favorite boys... and of course murder! :D

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!